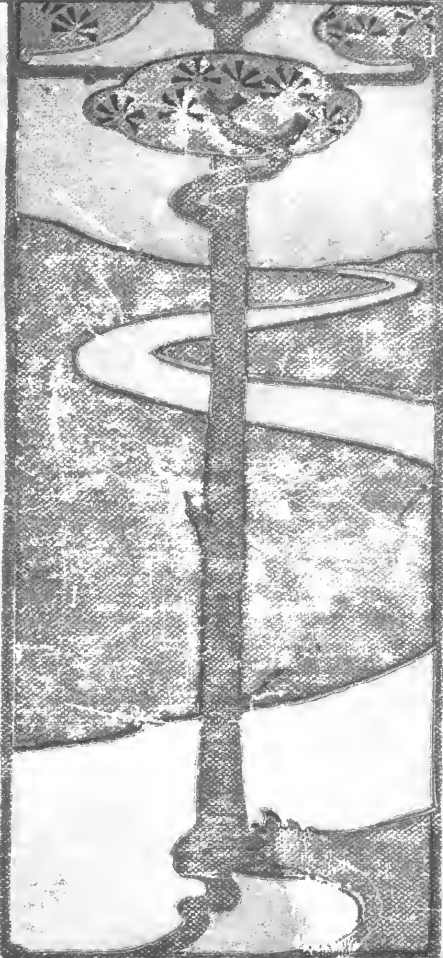


THE
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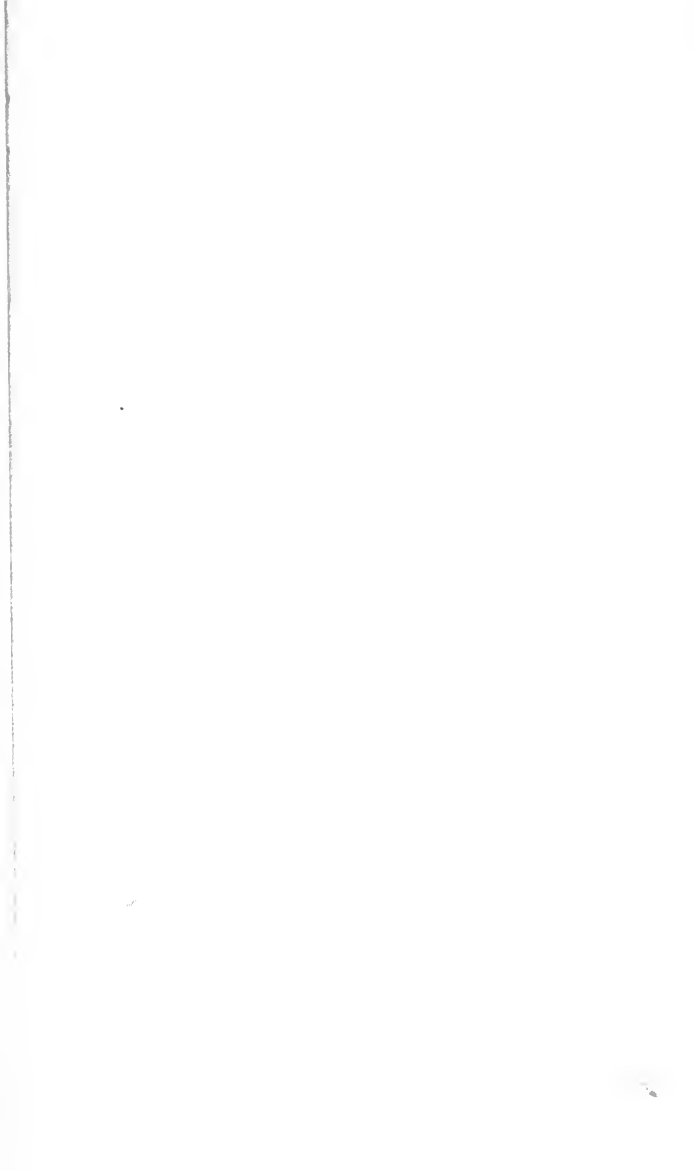


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THE MAN WHO
WORKED FOR COLLISTER

MARY TRACY EARLE



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PREFACE

IN preparing this little volume it is one of my pleasures to be able to thank "The Century," "McClure's Magazine," "The Outlook," "Munsey's," "The Monthly Illustrator Publishing Company," "Godey's Magazine," "Short Stories," "Scribner's," and "Harper's Monthly," not only for the privilege of using stories which they have printed, but for the many other kindnesses, courtesies, and encouragements which editors and publishers know so well how to extend to writers. I am glad, also, to explain that two of these tales, "The Race of the Little Ships" and "The Fig-Trees of Old Jourdé," were written in collaboration with my cousin, Marguerite Tracy. I include them here partly because they are of the South, like most of the other stories, and partly because in acknowledging their joint authorship I can connect my

PREFACE

cousin's name with the stories which I call my own, but which would never have been written without her interest and criticism. She may not thank me for passing the responsibility on in this way, but it is really hers.

M. T. E.

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THE MAN WHO WORKED FOR COLLISTER

PERHAPS the loneliest spot in all the pine-woods was the big Collister farm. Its buildings were not huddled in the centre of it, where they could keep one another in countenance, but each stood by itself, facing the desolate stretches of gray sand and pine stumps in its own way. Near each a few uncut pine trees kept guard, presumably for shade, but really sending their straggling shadows far beyond the mark. Many a Northern heart had ached from watching them, they were so tall and isolate; for, having been forest-bred, they had a sad and detached expression when they stood alone or in groups, just like the Northern faces when they met the still distances of the South.

In Collister's day he and the man who worked for him were the only strangers who had need to watch the pines. A land-improvement company had opened up the farm, but after sinking all its money in the insatiable depths of sandy soil, where the Lord, who

knew best, had planted pine trees, the great bustling company made an assignment of its stumpy fields, and somewhat later the farm passed into the hands of Collister. Who Collister was, and where he came from, were variously related far and wide through the piney woods; for he was one of those people whose lives are an odd blending of reclusion and notoriety. He kept up the little store on the farm; and, though it was usually his man who came up from the fields when any one stood at the closed store and shouted, its trade was largely augmented by the hope of seeing Collister.

The sunken money of the land company must have enriched the soil, for the farm prospered as well as the store, yielding unprecedentedly in such patches as the two men chose to cultivate. In midsummer the schooner-captains, in their loose red shirts, came panting up two sunburned miles from the bayou to chaffer with Collister or his man over the price of watermelons; and when their schooners were loaded, the land breeze which carried the cool green freight through bayou and bay out to the long reaches of the sound, where the sea wind took the burden on, sent abroad not only schooner and cargo and men, but countless strange reports of the ways and doings of Collister. At least one

of these bulletins never changed. Year after year, when fall came, and he had added the season's proceeds to his accumulating wealth, — when even the peanuts had been dug, and the scent of their roasting spread through the piney woods on the fresh air of the winter evenings, making an appetizing advertisement for the store, — it was whispered through the country, and far out on the gulf, that Collister said he would marry any girl who could make good bread — light bread. That settled at least one question: Collister came from the North. The man who worked for him was thought to have come from the same place; but though he did the cooking, his skill must have left something to be desired, and after current gossip had risked all its surmises on the likelihood of Collister's finding a wife under the condition imposed, it usually added that if Collister married, the man who worked for him would take it as a slight, and leave.

An old county road led through the big farm, and along it the country people passed in surprising numbers and frequency for so sparsely settled a region. They took their way leisurely, and if they could not afford a five-cent purchase at the store gave plenty of time to staring right and left behind the stumps, in a cheerful determination to see something worth remembrance. One day,

when the store chanced to be standing open, one of these passers walked up to the threshold and stood for a while looking in. The room was small and dingy, lighted only by the opening of the door, and crammed with boxes, leaky barrels, farm produce, and side-meat. One corner had been arranged with calicoes and ribbons and threads; but though the inspector was a young and pretty girl in the most dingy of cotton gowns, she had scarcely a thought for that corner; she was staring at a man who was so hard at work rearranging the boxes and barrels that he did not notice her shadow at his elbow. Finally he glanced up of his own accord.

"Hello," he said, coming forward; "do you want to buy something? Why didn't you sing out?"

For a little while longer the girl stared at him as steadily as if he had not moved. Most of the people who live in the pine woods come to have a ragged look, but this was the raggedest person she had ever seen. He was as ragged as a bunch of pine needles; yet he had the same clean and wholesome look, and his face was pleasant.

"Are you the man that works for Collister?" she asked.

"Yes," he said.

The girl looked him up and down again

with innocent curiosity. "How much does he give you?" she asked.

"Nothing but my board and clothes," the man answered, and smiled. He did not seem to find it hard work to stand still and watch her while her black eyes swiftly catalogued each rag. When they reached his bare brown feet she laughed.

"Then I think he had ought to dress you better, an' give you some shoes," she said.

"He does — winters," the man answered calmly.

She gave an impatient shake of her sun-bonnet. "That isn't the thing — just to keep you all warm," she explained. "A man like Mr. Collister had ought to keep you looking 'ristocratic."

The man who worked for Collister grinned. "Not very much in Collister's line," he said. "We might get mixed up if I was too dressy." He pulled a cracker-box forward, and dusted it. "If you ain't in a hurry, you'd better come inside and take a seat," he added.

The girl sank to the doorstep instead, taking off her bonnet. Its slats folded together as she dropped it into her lap, and she gave a sigh of relief, loosening some crushed tresses of hair from her forehead. She seemed to be settling down for a comfortable inqui-

sition. "What kind of clothes does Mr. Collister wear?" she began.

The man drew the cracker-box up near the doorway, and sat down. "Dressy," he said; "'bout like mine."

The girl gave him a look which dared to say, "I don't believe it."

"Honest truth," the man nodded. "Would you like to have me call him up from the field, and show him to you?"

Not to assent would have seemed as if she were daunted, and yet the girl had many more questions to ask about Collister. "Pretty soon," she said. "I suppose if you don't call him, he'll be coming for you. They say he works you mighty hard."

It is never pleasant to be spoken of as something entirely subject to another person's will. A slow flush spread over the man's face, but he answered loyally, "Collister may be mean to some folks, but he's always been mighty good to me." He smiled as he looked off from stump to stump across the clearing to the far rim of the forest. The stumps seemed to be running after one another, and gathering in groups to whisper secrets. "You've got to remember that this is a God-forsaken hole for anybody to be stuck in," he said; "'tain't in humanity for him to keep his soul as white as natural,

more'n his skin; but there's this to be said for Collister: he's always good to me."

"I'm right glad of that," the girl said. She too was looking out at the loneliness, and a little of it was reflected on her face. "You-all must think a heap of him," she added wistfully.

"You can just bet on that," he declared. "I've done him a heap of mean turns, too; but they was always done 'cause I didn't know any better, so he don't hold me any grudge."

"Wouldn't he mind if he knew you were a-losing time by sitting here talking to me?" she asked.

The man shook his head. "No," he answered cheerfully; "he wouldn't care — not for me. There isn't anybody else he would favor like that, but he makes it a point to accommodate me."

The girl gave her head a little turn. "Do you think he would accommodate me?" she asked.

He looked her over as critically as she had first looked at him. "It's a dangerous business answering for Collister," he ventured; "but maybe if *I* asked him to, he would."

"Well, you *are* bigotry," she asserted. "I can't no ways see what there is betwixt you. Why, they say that whilst you're working he

comes out in the field, an' bosses you under a' umbrelly; an' "— a laugh carried her words along like leaves on dancing water — " an' that he keeps a stool stropped to his back, ready to set down on whenever he pleases. Is it true — 'hones' truth'?"

A great mirth shook Collister's man from head to foot. "Such a figure — such a figure as the old boy cuts!" he gasped. "Sometimes I ask him if he'll keep his stool strapped on when he goes a-courting; and he says maybe so — it'll be so handy to hitch along closer to the young lady." Without thinking, he illustrated with the cracker-box as he spoke. "And as for the umbrella, I certainly ain't the one to object to that; for, you see, when the sun's right hot he holds it over me."

He leaned half forward as he spoke, smiling at her. It is hard to tell exactly when a new acquaintance ceases to be a stranger; but as the girl on the doorstep smiled in answer she was unexpectedly aware that the shrewd, kindly, furrowed face of this young man who worked for Collister was something which she had known for a long, long time. It seemed as familiar as the scent of pine needles and myrtle, or as the shafts of blue, smoke-stained sunlight between the brown trunks of the pine trees in the fall, or as the

feathery outline of green pine-tops against the dreamy intensity of a Southern sky; and when all this has been said of a girl who lives in the "pineys" there is no necessity for saying more. She gave a little nervous laugh.

The man began talking again. "It ain't such foolery as you would think, his wearing the stool and carrying the umbrella," he said. "This is the way he reasons it out, he says. In the first place there's the sun; that's a pretty good reason. But what started it was a blazing day up North, when he was hustling four deals at once; a man would need a head the size of a barrel to keep that sort of thing going for long, and Collister has just an ordinary head no bigger than mine. Well, the upshot of it was that he had a sunstroke, and was laid up a month; and then he reckoned up the day's business, and what he'd gained on one deal he'd lost on another, so that he came out even to a cent—queer, wasn't it?—with just the experience of a sunstroke to add to his stock in trade. Then he bought himself an umbrella and a stool, and began to take life fair and easy. Easy going is my way too; that's why we get along together."

There was a jar of candy on a shelf behind him and above his head, and, turning, he reached up a long arm and took it down. It

was translucent stick candy with red stripes round it — just such candy as every fortunate child knew twenty years ago, and some know still. In the piney woods it has not been superseded as a standard of delight, and the children expect to receive it gratuitously after any extensive purchase. Near the coast, where creole words have spread, it is asked for by a queer sweet name — lagnappe (something thrown in for good measure). The man who worked for Collister handed the jar across to the girl, making her free of it with a gesture.

“Do you reckon Mr. Collister would want me to take some?” she asked, poising her slender brown hand on the edge of the jar. “You know, they say that when he first come hyar, an’ the children asked him for lagnappe, he pretended not to onderstan’ ’em, and said he was sorry, but he hadn’t got it yet in stock. Is that true?”

“Yes,” the man answered; “that’s true.”

“Well, *did* he onderstan’?” she asked.

He lifted his shoulders in a way he had learned in the South. “To be sure,” he said. “I told him at the time that it was a mean thing to do, but he said he simply couldn’t help himself; young ones kept running here from miles around to get five cents’ worth of baking-sody and ask for a stick of

candy. But take some; he won't mind, for he's always good to me."

She drew back her hand. "No," she said, pouting; "I'm going to come in sometime when he's hyar, an' see if he'll give some lagnappe to me."

"I'll tell him to," the man said.

"Well, you *are* bigoty!" the girl repeated.

"If I was to tell him to," the man persisted, "who should I say would ask for it?"

She looked at him defiantly. "I'll do the telling," she said; "but while we're talking about names, what's yours?"

"Well," he answered, "if you're not naming any names, I don't believe I am. You know considerably more about me already than I do about you."

"Oh, just as you please," she said. To be brought blankly against the fact that neither knew the other's name caused a sense of constraint between them. She picked up her bonnet, and put it on as if she might be about to go; and though she did not rise, she turned her face out-of-doors so that the bonnet hid it from him — and it was such a pretty face!

"Say, now," he began, after one of those pauses in which lives sometimes sway restlessly to and fro in the balances of fate, "I didn't mean to make you mad. I'll tell you my name if you want to know."

"I'm not so anxious," she said. One of her brown hands went up officiously and pulled the bonnet still farther forward. "Is it true," she asked, "that Mr. Collister says he will marry any girl that can make good light bread?"

The man formed his lips as if to whistle, and then stopped. "Yes," he said, eying the sunbonnet, "it's true."

She turned round and surprised him. "I can make good light bread," she announced.

"You!" he said.

"Yes," she answered sharply; "why not? It ain't so great a trick."

"But" — he paused, meeting the challenge of her face uneasily — "but did you come here to say that?"

"You've heard me say it," she retorted.

He rose and stood beside her, looking neither at her, nor at the fields, nor at the encircling forest, but far over and beyond them all, at the first touches of rose-color on the soft clouds in the west. He seemed very tall as she looked up to him, and his face was very grave. She had forgotten long ago to notice his bare feet and tattered clothing. "So that means," he said slowly, "that you came here to offer to marry a man that you never saw."

She did not answer for a moment, and

when she did her voice was stubborn. "No," she said; "I came hyar to say that I know how to make light bread. You needn't be faultin' me for his saying that he would marry any girl that could."

"But you would marry him?"

"I allow if he was to ask me I would."

The man looked down squarely to meet her eyes, but he found only the sunbonnet. "What would you do it for," he asked, "a lark?"

"A lark!" she echoed; "oh, yes, a lark!"

He stooped toward her and put his hand on her shoulder. "Look up here," he said; "I want to see if it's a lark or not."

"I jus' said it was," she answered, so low that he had to bend a little closer to be certain that he heard.

"That won't do," he said firmly; "you must look up into my face."

"I—won't!" she declared.

He stood gazing at her downcast head. There was something that shone in his eyes, and his tongue was ready to say, "You must." He closed his lips and straightened himself again. The girl sat perfectly still, except that once in a while there was a catch in her breath. He kept looking off into the empty, sighing reaches of pine country, which could make people do strange things. "We haven't

known each other very long," he said at last; "but a few minutes ago I thought we knew each other pretty well, and perhaps you don't have any better friend than I am in this desolate hole. Won't you tell me why it is that you want to marry Collister?"

"For his money," the girl answered shortly.

His face darkened as if he were cursing Collister's money under his breath; but she did not look up, and he said nothing until he could speak quietly. "Is that quite fair to Collister?" he asked. "He did talk about marrying any girl that could make good light bread; but I don't suppose he wanted to do it unless she liked him a little, too."

"I — allowed — maybe I'd like him a little," the girl explained; "an' I was right sure that he'd like me."

"That's the mischief of it," the man muttered; "I'll warrant he'll like you!"

After hiding her face so long the girl looked up, and was surprised to see him so troubled. "You've been right good to me," she said gently, "an' I reckon I don't mind — perhaps I had ought to tell you jus' why I come. I — I don't want to be mean to Mr. Collister, an' if you don't think it's fair I won't tell him I can make good bread; only" — she met his eyes appealingly — "if I don't, I don't see what I'm goin' to do."

"What's the matter?" he asked. "Don't you have any home?"

She smiled bravely, so that it was sorrowful to see her face. "Not any more," she said. "I've always had a right good home, but my paw died — only las' week. You an' Mr. Collister used to know him, an' he has often spoke of both of you. He was Noel Seymour from up at Castauplay."

"Noel Seymour — dead?" said the man. All her light words pleaded with him for tenderness now that he knew she had said them with an aching heart. "But Seymour was a creole," he added, "and you are not."

"My own mother was an American," the girl answered, "an' I learned my talk from her before she died; an' then my stepmother is American, too." She stopped just long enough to try to smile again. "What do you think?" she asked. "My stepmother don't like me. She isn't going to let me stay at home any more. Could you be as mean as that?"

He put his hand on her shoulder. "You poor child!" he said; for gossip came in sometimes in return for all that radiated from the farm, and he could recall a cruel story he had once heard of Noel Seymour's wife. It made him believe all and more than the girl had told him. "Poor child!" he said again;

"you haven't told me yet what's your first name."

"Ginevra," she answered. "My own mother liked it; my stepmother says it's the name of a fool. She thinks she's young an' han'some; but I allow she's sending me off because I'm a right smart the best-favored of the two. She wants to get married again, an' thar ain't but one bacheldor up our way, so she's skeered he'd take first pick of me."

"My kingdom!" said the man who worked for Collister. "If there's somebody up your way that you know, and that likes you, why didn't you go and take your chances with him?"

A hot flush rushed over the girl's face. "Does you-all think I'd be talkin' like this to a man I knowed?" she demanded. She stared angrily until her lips began to quiver. "An' besides, I hate him!" she cried. "He's not a fittin' man for such as me."

"You poor child!" he said again.

She caught the compassion of his eyes. "What had I ought to have done?" she asked. "What had any girl ought to do out hyar in the pineys if she was lef' like me? I've hearn o' places whar girls could find work, an' my stepmother she allowed I could go to the oyster-factories in Potosi; but whar would I *stay*? An' then I went to the fac-

tories onct with my paw, an' the air round 'em made me sick. You see, I was raised in the pineys, an' they has a different smell."

He shook his head, though kindly, at so slight a reason, and the sharp pain of his disapproval crossed her face. "Oh, you don't know anything about it," she cried desperately; "thar ain't no man that can tell how it feels for a girl that's had a father that's made of her like mine did to be turned right out to face a whole townful that she never saw. Can't you see how, if you was skeered, it would be a heap easier jus' to face one man? An' then I'd hearn no end about Mr. Collister, an' some of it was funny, an' thar wa'n't none of it very bad; so I jus' made up my mind to come round hyar an' see for myse'f what like he was. You see," she went on, with a lift of the head, "it was for the money, but it was for the honorableness, too; an' I'd cross my heart an' swear to you on the Bible that when I come hyar I hadn't no thought that anybody could think it was onder-reachin' Mr. Collister. I thought he'd be right proud, an' before we got to talking I never sensed that it would be a hard thing to name to him; but now"—her voice trembled and broke. "Oh," she cried, "I wished I'd never come!"

The man looked away from her. "Don't

wish it," he said huskily. "Collister ought to be proud if he can have you for his wife; and he would give you a good home and everything your heart could ask for."

Tears sprang into her eyes, and she dropped her head upon her knees to hide them. "Oh, I know, I know," she sobbed; "but I'd rather marry you!"

"O-oh!" breathed the man who worked for Collister; "I'd so much rather that you did." And with a laugh of pure delight he caught her up into his arms.

When they left the store a red blaze of sunset shone between the trunks of the pine trees. The man fastened the padlock behind them, and they started in a lovers' silence along the road. The big farm was as empty and lifeless as ever, except for the lonesome neighing of a horse in the barnyard and for a single straight blue thread of smoke which rose from one of the little houses. The girl pointed at it, and smiled.

"He's having to get his own supper to-night," she said; "but I'll make it up to him: I'll make his light bread jus' the same."

"Yes," he said, "you'd better; for, whatever he's been to other folks, he's always been mighty good to me; an', please God, he's going to be mighty good to you."

A breath of land breeze had started in the pine woods, and was going out bearing a tribute of sweet odors to the sea. The disk of the sun sank below the black line of the earth, but the trees were still etched against a crimson sky. Softly and faintly in the far distance some passing creole hailed another with a long, sweet call. They reached the edge of the clearing, and went on through the deepening twilight of the pines. There were no words in all the world quite true enough to speak in that great murmurous stillness that was in the woods and in their hearts. At last they came to a path beyond which she would not let him go, thinking it better for this last time to go on alone.

"Good-night," she said lingeringly; and he held her close and kissed her, whispering good-night. Then he stood and watched her slender, swaying figure as it grew indistinct between the trees; and just before it vanished he called out guardedly.

"Say," he summoned, "come here!"

She went laughing back to him. "You-all *are* bigoty," she said, "beginning to order me about!"

He took her hands, and held her from him so that he could see her face. "You mustn't be mad at me," he said; "but there's something I forgot to tell you — I'm Collister."

THE MASK OF THE LOST SOUL

IN one of the queer narrow streets back of the Place d'Armes old Hippolyte Dolbert sat, day in and day out, painting his masks. It was his busy season, for the Carnival was coming soon — the Carnival of the old days, when all the city trooped out into the streets, that high and low might frolic together and do homage unstintedly to the mysterious Rex.

Already the children on the warped banquettes talked of nothing but the Carnival, and of the strange places from which Rex had last sent messages in his progress out of the East. They even left their games to come peeping into Hippolyte's shop, chattering and choosing the masks they would like from the many hung about the room to dry. Sometimes their voices so disturbed old Hippolyte that he felt like closing the door; yet he did not close it, for whenever he started up, frowning ominously, the children shrank back with such woe-begone little faces that he would only stand a moment on the threshold, fanning himself and complaining

that never before had there been such warm weather in the early part of February, and that he felt more like going over the lake for a breath of air than sitting all year long painting masks. Dolbert was always planning to go over the lake for a breath of air, but in point of fact it was only at Carnival time that he even went so far from his dark little shop as to cross into the heart of the city. People used to live quietly in those days, and yet strange things happened sometimes in the queer narrow streets back of the Place d'Armes. Dolbert looked on and saw all that happened, and when it was very sad and his mind was burdened with it his lips smiled whimsically as he painted on his comic masks.

Night had just fallen, scattering the children from the street, and blotting it out except in the rare circles where the lamps made their feeble protest. It was long past his easy hours for keeping shop, and the old man had let his daughter cross the way to gossip with a friend. He himself had stopped working, but he still sat in a chair by his work-table, and once in a while he picked up an unfinished mask, held it on his hand and talked to it, for when he was alone and idle in the evening stillness there were eyes long closed that wakened to laugh or to weep with him

behind the faces which had come to be his friends.

"Good evening, 'Sieur Hippolyte,'" a voice said at the door. The mask-painter rose and went forward, carrying the mask still upon his hand.

"Good evening," he said questioningly.

The stranger reached out, took the mask from Hippolyte's hand, put it on his own, and looked at it long. It was but half-painted, and the change from vivid coloring to ashy white gave it a grotesque look of illness and pain.

"Does monsieur find it attractive?" the old painter inquired at last in a soft voice. He had grown impatient of the steady, wordless gaze.

"It has a strange look of suffering," the stranger answered, "but can you do nothing better than that?"

"This will not be sad when it is done," Hippolyte hastened to assure him. "I shall make it very merry. If monsieur wishes something more laughing, however, something burlesque" —

The man lifted up the mask and fitted it on his face. "What I want," he said from behind it, "is the face of a lost soul."

Hippolyte looked into the stranger's eyes, which were full of such infinite sorrow that

they seemed vacant of all thought. "A strange mask, that, for you to wear," he said gently. "Why not choose something merry? For, pardon me, but it would be a better disguise."

"I have not asked for a disguise," said the stranger, pulling aside the mask. "I have only given you an order. Can you fill it for me as I wish, and keep it until the eve of Carnival?"

Without realizing what he did, old Hippolyte searched the lines of the face before him with the understanding of a man who has studied faces all his life. "Yes," he said, with a slow bend of the head, "I think I can make you what you wish, and no one shall see it until it is in your own hands on the eve of Carnival."

"I do not care as to that," answered the stranger. "You seem to misunderstand me in some way, but it does not matter, for all that I wish is the mask. Good evening, 'Sieur Hippolyte; but remember—the face of a lost soul."

When 'Sieur Hippolyte was alone again he sat down, put the unfinished mask once more on his hand, and nodded at it solemnly. "But you do care," he said to it; and then, after he had been silent for a while, he said the same thing again. "But you do care,

and I will be as good as my word. No one shall see it until you call for it, and then — may the good God help you when the two of you are met.”

’Sieur Hippolyte shrugged his shoulders, and went across the street after his daughter, for it was time that young girls were asleep. As for him, he was ill friends with slumber, and far into the night he bent over his work. The whole pent-up fineness of the man awoke and rejoiced in its opportunity, but as his mind determined and his hands wrought out the exquisite anguish of the mask his face grew dim and haggard from looking into the face of a lost soul.

“ ’Sieur Hippolyte ! ” It was the eve of Carnival, and ’Sieur Hippolyte had sent his daughter across the way again, or, rather, he had let her go ; for she could not have stayed still in the shop with him that night, when the fleet of Rex was reported just below the city, ready to send ashore its marvellous crews on the morrow. Her merry chatter drifted to her father, mingled with the fragrance which spread over the high walls of the gardens. But the voice that spoke his name was quite distinct and apart.

“ Come inside,” said ’Sieur Hippolyte, rising. “ That which you have ordered is

waiting for you, but I do not have it among these other masks that know nothing but to mock."

"If this is what I wish," said the stranger, "they would do well to mock it — but what has happened? I beg your forgiveness a thousand times if I have intruded my whim into a house of sorrow."

He bowed his head as he spoke, for 'Sieur Hippolyte had led him into a room where candles were burning around something that was covered with a white cloth.

"No," said the mask-painter, and his thin brown face felt the strange tingling of a flush beneath the skin. "It is I who have intruded my whim. I did not think to see you quite so early, and pardon the presumption of an old man, but each night since my work was done I have lighted candles to say a prayer."

He drew away the cloth, and they looked down upon the mask. The stranger started back with lips twitching and eyes on fire. "Who told you," he cried, pointing with a long, straight finger at the mask, "who told you that I am a lost soul?"

"Pardon, monsieur," said Hippolyte, lifting the mask and holding it beside the stranger's face; "if you will come with me to a mirror you will see that they are very

different, and if any chance resemblance has crept into them it is not that I so willed it. I have only tried to make you that which you asked; and may the good God punish me but as the thing grew under my hands I thought I was succeeding more than well."

The stranger took the mask and looked into its vacant eyes. "You have succeeded," he said, "and that is all I asked. It is better as it is, perhaps; for, after all, I do not wish it as a disguise. But," he added, as he paid old Hippolyte, "remember, if you see this mask on the street to-morrow, for the love of mercy and justice stop in your laughter to say another prayer!"

'Sieur Hippolyte put his hand on the man's shoulder. "My son," he said, "perhaps it has been a sin for me to make you a mask like that; I have worked at it distrustfully, and yet the fascination of it has held me. But if you are planning to have it help you in anything that is evil, then half of the guilt will be mine, and I beg you to think much this night, with that face of despair like a mirror before you, and see if it is not in your soul to yield up your plan. My prayers may be very good, but your own sacrifice of wrath or greed or whatever it is that besets you will take you farther toward the gates of heaven."

The stranger gave 'Sieur Hippolyte a smile that was very kind. "I am planning nothing that is evil," he said, "and you need fear nothing for having written the anguish of my life even upon this mask. It may cover a peaceful face when to-morrow's work is done. You will have many clues to what may happen to-morrow, and you are free to use them as you will, yet ever afterward I shall believe more in a good face if I see you whispering a prayer for me, rather than whispering to others what you know of the mask of the lost soul."

"You forget that I may wear a mask myself," answered Hippolyte; "but God knows it will not be to do injury to you or any other man! That is not what I make them for."

"Nor why I wear them," answered the stranger. He was silent a moment and then he put out his hand. Hippolyte took it and they parted with a secret yearning, each of them more anxious for the morrow than any of the joyful souls who counted off the hours.

The next day Hippolyte wore the mask which he had held on his hand when the stranger first came to him. He had finished it without changing its look of suffering. An odd fancy prompted him: he did not wish the mask of the stranger to be the only one

that told of pain. So Hippolyte, in the mask of the tortured body, went seeking, seeking, in and out through the crowds for the mask of the lost soul.

The great day-pageant had wound slowly through the city, and the merry throngs that had watched it began to spread and stream along the streets, laughing, joking, pelting one another, marching in motley bands through the houses at their will, claiming the privilege of the day to make the city their own. Hippolyte had grown weary of the ceaseless gay confusion, and his steps were trending homeward. He would rest a little to be ready for the procession of the night, and perhaps, too, the mask he sought was waiting for darkness before showing its strange sorrow among the revellers. Not that he expected to see it; he had been a fool to come out fancying it would be the first thing to meet him on the street. There were too many people abroad for that, and though he could not tell what he wanted of the mask he was weighted down with the hopelessness of finding it. Perhaps already it had finished its work — strange partial meeting of lives, that he should know so much and so little of this man's tragedy.

There were shouts of laughter and a pulsing rush of feet behind him. He found him-

self encircled and seized by a noisy band of masks.

"Ah-ha, Brother Sorrow," they cried, "you should have stayed in the house to-day! You should have stayed in just one day before bringing out your Lenten face," and they dragged him at a run down the street.

"Loose me! loose me!" he gasped, wrenching at the strong young hands. He did not forget that it was Carnival, but he had grown too tired to acknowledge the rights of laughter over pain. "I tell you I will make you all into Brothers of Sorrow. Loose me! loose me! You are dragging out my arms."

"No, Brother Sorrow, you look no worse than before," they cried. "If you like not aches and pains you should not wear that mask. This is the day when all sombre faces go to judgment. On! faster! faster! To the merry justice in the Place d'Armes!"

"To the merry justice! To the merry justice!" The cry came ringing down another street, and another troop of maskers rushed headlong round a corner, breaking through the ranks of Hippolyte's captors and throwing another unfortunate into their midst. Hippolyte was unhandcd and stood staring at the sour, barefaced new-comer, who stared back at him and at the circle of laughing, leaping guards.

"Ah, Brothers Sorrow," they shouted, "now you can each see how you mar the day! Just dance a little, Brothers Sorrow,—dance while we make the music, and you can still escape from the merry justice yonder in the Place."

Hippolyte and his companion exchanged a glum look of challenge and stood still. They were grasped again and swept onward in an ever-increasing crowd and turmoil, until they reached the shadow of the old stuccoed court buildings facing the Place d'Armes. The gay misrule had centred there for its caprice, and as Hippolyte and his guards approached, the voice of the merry justice was already raised requesting laughter in the court.

About twenty unhappy-looking people were huddled at the foot of the great cask which had been rolled up by the wall for the throne of justice. They wore no masks, but their troubled faces did not change as the new captives were thrust among them, and a babel of mirth answered the call of His Honor on the cask.

There were tired people and sad people and wicked people; but as Hippolyte was the only masked prisoner the justice motioned him forward first of all.

"Brother Sorrow," he cried in a piping

voice, "if you are but pretending to be Brother Sorrow, if you can pull off that mask and show a merry face beneath we will grant you our gracious pardon for this one transgression, flippantly warning you never to break the law of Carnival again. We wait your transfiguration, Brother Sorrow."

Hippolyte held his silence.

"You refuse?" said the justice; "then here is one more chance. Amuse us, — make us roar with laughter by telling us what absurdity has caused your sadness, — and that shall set you free."

Hippolyte still said nothing. He was no longer angry, he merely had a mind to see this to the end; but before the justice could begin his sentence there was a fresh inpouring of shouts and laughter.

"Wait! wait!" cried the voices. "Let all lesser prisoners wait! They will look gay enough beside this Brother Sorrow!"

"Hurry him in! Hurry him in! Hurry" — the word failed, as a thrill of silence cut its way before the mask of the lost soul. He walked forward eagerly toward the spangled justice on the cask.

"I have wandered all day," he said, "seeking one who cared whether I were gay or sad. It is more nearly joy than I have known to be summoned even to this Court of Mirth."

The silence spread around the tall, masked figure until the justice rapped again sharply with his jingling rod, crying in his shrillest voice, "Laughter! laughter! Must I impose a general fine for this respect of court?"

"Yes," said the lost soul, looking around him, "laugh!" And stillness fell again with his words. "Does your Jocund Honor," he went on, "grant me a hearing in the Court of Mirth?"

The justice leaned forward, bowing his fool's cap low. "To you," he answered, "who seem a mighty man in the Land of Sorrow, the Court of Mirth offers all the distinguished consideration due to one who, as a stranger, has broken laws which he could not understand. Be pleased in your own way to plead your case and rest assured that our statutes will be construed for you as mildly as they may."

"I think," answered the mask, "that even in the land and day of mirth my face will soon be understood, for here, under these walls, I can speak well. They are not Courts of Mirth that are held there within. When I gave witness there — *you* know now who I am, you people who have suffered until your faces are gray tragedies — I shuddered at some of your faces; and you shuddered at me that day when I condemned my friend, and not

one of you laughers laughed. You thought, and I thought, I had damned myself that day when my testimony — don't you know me yet? The face below is like the face above! But I tell you I believed what I said, and I hated him because I thought he had killed my enemy. I believed what I said — and I wished we both might die, since he was worthy death. But, Brothers of Mirth, that was a merry day; it is since then that I have known suffering. Would you like to see my face?"

The justice bowed, and the lost soul drew off his mask and looked about. Many had known him in the past, but they looked more than once, his face was swept so bare of everything but sorrow.

"My friend is within there," he said, pointing to the prison walls beyond the court, "and I am a free man here outside — a free man, but a guiltier man than he, for the crime was done for love of me. No, not by him. There were two who loved me better than I loved them — this is what we come to when we are loved better than we love." He held up the mask.

The merry justice stooped and lifted the mask above his head. "Higher," said the lost soul; "there may be some on the outskirts who do not see what it is we come to when we do not love as well as we are loved."

He stood gazing up into the mask. At last he looked around as if awakening. "Am I justified, Brothers of Mirth?" he asked. "Are you lighter of heart, Brothers of Sorrow?"

"But the other who did the crime?" It was Hippolyte who spoke.

The lost soul looked at him. "She told me as she died," he said, "and she died in my arms. I had learned the sorrow of love before it was too late for that. She had suffered — I did penance for her suffering when I kissed her, with my heart crying for my friend."

"And you have not told this in the real courts?" asked the merry justice.

"They will not listen to me," said the lost soul. "No one heard her but me, she was so quick to die. They think it is my own remorse. You know better than that here, in the Court of Mirth; you know that empty remorse does not make us look like that — lift the mask higher on your staff!"

The merry justice lifted it as high as his belled staff would reach, but the lost soul sprang up beside him and caught the staff from his hands. "Come!" he shouted. "If you have pity for sorrow, the way is justice! If you love mirth, the way is justice! Follow me until we right this wrong, and then I will help you laugh!"

He sprang from the cask, and the maskers rushed forward with him, bearing with them the men of sorrow. "Justice!" they shouted. "Justice before mirth!"

"Justice!" they were shouting as they reached the prison doors. "Justice!" — and the lost soul knocked a long and resonant knock with the jester's staff. A hush fell on the street after it; they were listening breathless outside, and still more breathlessly within, for justice is not over-welcome at the prison door.

The lost soul knocked again. Not a sound within, not a sound outside. The Place d'Armes and all the streets about it were empty. Only the breath of music floated fitfully across the silence. Darkness gathered. The night procession would soon flaunt through the city's distant heart.

The lost soul struck his baton sharply through the grating of a window, shattering the glass, so that they heard it tinkle on the floor. They raised him till his face was pressed against the bars.

"We are many and strong," he said, "and we ask only for one man. You who guard the door, will you bring him to us, or shall we open for ourselves?" But the prison, unguarded from without on that careless day, seemed doubly guarded by its dumbness.

The lost soul drew back, jumped down among the men, seized a heavy club and rushed with it against the door. The maskers found such weapons as they could, and beat and battered with them until every shadow of the place seemed crashing into sound. "Justice!" they clamored, "justice!" But all save one of the men of sorrow shrank back, remembering their uncovered faces, and disappeared among the echoes that crashed louder and louder until the strong door was shivered and made way for mirth.

The prisoners cowered in their cells, and wondered who was sought, for there had been no sound of mercy in the cries outside, and they trembled though the cries had ceased. Then they began to listen with sharp ears, it was so still. Only a few quick footsteps in the corridors; the opening of a door; footsteps again, growing fainter, and dying in their ears. Then sounds of hammering, then silence deepening until they heard one another stir and breathe, and until they shrank at even hearing that, such strangeness bound them in the night.

The Brothers of Mirth sped apart wordlessly along the streets, looking at no one, and hastening to mingle in the greater throng; for when their mission was ended, and they heard the prison door close behind them, and the

frightened guards hammering to make it more secure, a sudden horror seized them of the thing that they had done. They did not care to see where the lost soul vanished, leading his rescued convict like a child. But the masked Brother of Sorrow leaped after him.

"Brother of the Lost Soul," he cried, "can I be of aid?"

"Gentle Brother of Suffering," answered the stranger, "I have thrown aside that name in the street yonder with the mask, and your aid was given yesterday when you burned candles round the white cloth. Yet, if you are minded to, pray for us again — there are hard days to come in the swamps, and paddling in the shadow of the rushes, and we shall be safer for a true soul's prayer."

He stretched out his hand, and Hippolyte grasped it. "Brother of the Ransomed Soul," he said, "my life thanks thee for passing so close to it. I shall pray, but pray also for me, and fare thee well."

"Fare thee well," said the ransomed soul, and hurried forward with his friend.

When Hippolyte could see him no longer he followed him, and watched him lift his weak friend in his arms and carry him until they came to the river that is strong and swift and kindly, asking no questions of the fugitives who trust its strength. Then Hip-

polyte turned homeward, and as he walked he spoke to something that he carried in his hand.

"There will be but one of you," he said to it, "for the other face will change. I am glad that I found you where you fell. It would be wiser, perhaps, when I reach home to put you in the flames, but I will not. You are a ransomed soul. Only the good God in His eternities will make other faces fine as this."

He reached home and lighted candles around the mask, and whispered many prayers.

THE RACE OF THE LITTLE SHIPS

“For all averr’d, I had killed the bird
That made the breeze to blow.”

THERE are many houseless landings on Bayou Marie. Paths lead back from them with no visible object, and save for an occasional boat tied to a broken post or a tree-root strangers would think them long abandoned.

To Rubier Pierre, as he moored his skiff at one of these points, the trail which faintly invited him was anything but objectless. It led far back to the house of Michael Lopez. Michael was the father of Hortense.

It was a brilliant day: the sun glowed on the burnished Marie, in the quivering air, from the shining clouds, from the infinite haunting sky.

The shadow of the pines was like silence, and Rubier escaped into it gladly, although he had felt no discomfort in the blinding tumult of light. Rubier was a creole schooner-man, with close-set eyes grown

unflinching in the long bright reaches of the Sound and the marsh-bordered Rigolets between Pontomoc and New Orleans.

The thread of path led straight into the exquisite suspense of the woods, where, feeling the expectancy, it wavered and finally stood still in a sunny opening brown with pine needles. Not so with Rubier: he knew that it would reappear along the high ground, but there were longer and shorter ways of reaching Hortense; he struck off on a still dimmer trail that dropped recklessly into the damp gloom of a ravine.

Above the rich, crowding water-growth, above the bays and magnolias, towered the austere, always remote, always dominating pines. Rubier, the path, and a dilatory moss-loving brook sauntered beneath, conscious merely of their own transient purposes. The path and Rubier did not mind finding the brook under their feet at every turn, for Rubier's feet were bare and the path was unpretentious. Rubier swung a white gull's wing in one hand, and whistled as he went. In some time of affluence the brook had laid a tempting chip of cypress out of harm's way at the foot of a tree. Here Rubier, discovering it, reached for it without scruple as he passed. It was well dried, light as a feather, and seemed to compel a knife from his

pocket. He stuck the gull's wing into his hat. Much pulling on to the crown of his black head had demolished the hat cord, but a hole placed conveniently at one side held the wing, and left him free to carve his chip.

Once Rubier stood still and listened. The faintest of sounds reached him, scarcely more than the breathing of the woods, but it was enough to make him quite confident that Hortense was at home. He threw back his head, and flung into the silence the searching, plaintive call that creoles know. The echoes, tossing it softly back and forth in the woods, could not tone it to the sweetness of the distant voice that answered. Rubier gave a rapturous nod, felt of the gull's wing to be sure that it had not dropped from his hat, and walked on.

The woods were very fond of Michael Lopez. They crowded so close to shelter his low roof that had it been a broader one they would have left no space for the clean-swept dooryard, with its cherished crape-myrtles and fig-trees. At the corner of the cabin a hospitable live-oak asserted against the example of the pines the right of all live-oaks to stretch out strong, spreading arms for earthly companionship. In its dense shadow the sound that reassured Rubier had

ceased. At the flickering edge of the shadow waited Hortense.

"I guess yo' look faw me yestahday," began Rubier, coming up with one hand closed round a tiny object which had lately been the chip.

The never-absent creole sunbonnet had fallen backward, and Rubier saw a little curve of cheek and flash of eyes.

"Noel Roget was home yestahday," she said.

Rubier scowled. The creoles mean "at my house" when they say "home."

"An' Annie, an' Frances, an' Paul, dey was all heah," continued Hortense, pulling up the bonnet. "W'ere yo' was?"

"I spen' my Sunday polin', me," answered Rubier, with gloomy directness. "We didn' get in till 'way midnight, an' soon as de tide tu'n we goin' up Porto faw coal. Noel, is he goin' out dis week?"

"No. Has it tu'n de style at New Orleans faw men to weah feathahs on dey heads?"

Rubier had forgotten the gull's wing; he plucked it from his hat and gave it to her.

"I guess it de style faw men w'at got dey han's full," he retorted, brightening. "I shot dis gull off Point aux Cerfs, on de way out, an' tack de wings on de mas' to dry. Pretty, ain't he?"

“Yas; w'at faw yo' kill him?”

Rubier was disappointed; he had expected her to be more enthusiastic over the snowy thing. “W'at faw I kill him?” he repeated vaguely. “I dunno. De fool t'ings was feedin' away dere on de bar like ole hens, den w'en dey see us dey had to cleah out so fas', an' I t'ink to myse'f, ‘Yo' mighty wil' w'en yo' spread yo' wings out. I show yo' how to keep still.’ W'en I shot, dis one dropped so pretty I t'ink, ‘Hortense like dat wing in her hat;’ an' I row out faw it, see?”

“Ver' pretty,” said Hortense, stroking it regretfully with her hand.

“I got somet'ing else,” Rubier ventured, feeling rather excluded by her sympathy with the gull's wing. He opened his hand, revealing about two inches of exquisite wood-carving.

“A play boat!” cried Hortense eagerly. “Oh, how it is little!”

“'Bout big 'nough faw yo' to sail nex' Sunday,” Rubier answered, his face radiant.

Hortense laughed. “I doan' b'lieve Noel Roget can whittle like dis, not? I mus' make sail faw her.”

“Make it 'bout de size of yo' hand,” suggested Rubier. It had done him good to see Hortense laugh.

“But yo' play boat, de big one, is she

ready?" Hortense asked, toying with the advance guard of all her ships of hope.

"I race her nex' Sunday; she's all ready but de name."

"T'ought yo' was goin' up Porto faw coal," objected Hortense. "Yo' doan' seem to care much 'bout gettin' home faw Sunday."

"Yo' t'ink I not goin' to be home by Sunday? I fix to get my coal an' beat Noel Roget, too. He t'ink his little sloop can stan' mo' win' dan my play boat, but I guess I show him, me. Yo' goin' to be dere?"

"Maybe," Hortense promised; "but if yo' ain', I'll know sure yo' don' care 'bout comin' faw Sunday."

There was a little pause in which the live-oak whispered something to the trees that could not see.

"Yo' been rice hullin'," began Rubier at last. "I heah yo' back in de woods."

"I fawgot," cried Hortense in dismay. "I ain' half done, an' mamma wan's it faw *jumbolai*."

"I he'p yo'," said Rubier promptly. "Be an houah befo'de tide tu'n," and together they retreated into the deeper shadow of the live-oak.

No one could remember when the creoles

had not raced their toy boats over the clear, sandy shoals of Pointe St. Jacques. Tenant strangers might come and go from the Point itself, but it would never occur to the racers to change their ground. Every Sunday of the racing season saw the creole population assembled on the beach — the women in holiday dress, the men ready for wading, boats in hand, trousers rolled well above their brown knees.

“Rubier doan’ seem to care ’bout gettin’ in faw Sunday no mo’,” Noel Roget suggested to Hortense. “If I can’ sail I pull home faw Sunday, me. Reckon he’s skeered to race his boat.”

“He come, yo’ see,” replied Hortense, looking across the calm, sparkling bay.

Far up Porto some white sails hovered over the marsh. “W’en?” asked Noel scornfully.

“Little Peter got de boat hyah,” Hortense went on evasively. “He goin’ to run her if Rubier doan’ get in. An’ I goin’ to run dis, see?”

“Yo’ call dat a boat?” scoffed Noel, weighing the mimic toy in his palm. “Run dat in a coffee cup, I guess.”

A soft-voiced clan of girls surrounded it admiringly, plying Hortense with questions. Noel gave it up to them, and went off among the men.

Peter Pierre, Rubier's younger brother, was proudly displaying the new toy boat to the other racers. In these many-branched creole families the given name of the father is often used as the surname of the children, to distinguish them from their numberless cousins. Both surnames and given names are few, and only ingenious combining and the occasional adoption of English forms prevent constant repetition. The alliterative monotony of Peter Pierre's name had had a soothing effect on his character; he did not resemble Rubier at all, and Noel Roget would be very glad to race against the new toy boat under his management.

"Rubier look like he stuck, up on dat ma'sh," Noel remarked cheerfully. "Yo'll have to fly dat 'Gull' yo'se'f, Peter."

"Ah yo' all ready?" called old Brisset, the ship-carpenter, who always started the races.

For answer there was a shout of voices resonant from the summer seas, a turmoil of splashing feet in the water, and the racers stood in line, holding their little ships.

"Start!" cried old Brisset.

The tiny fleet touched water. A land breeze that meant nothing to Rubier, in the shelter of marsh and woods up the bayou, sent the light things forward, courtesying to the ripples. Their captains, from grand-

fathers to grandsons, waded after them, stooping excitedly to direct their course. The women, young children, and a few non-sporting men watched them from the beach.

"Lazaré one fool, a very beeg one, prit' near two," sneered Aristide Le Rat, a born Frenchman, who had sailed the high seas. "Zey play, an' zey play, an' zey play all week wiz zere leetl' schooners in zese leetl' shallow bays and soun's; an' zen zey mus' play ze same ridicule way *toujours, toujours*, on Sunday. Lazaré ees altogezer a flea; 'e jump an' 'e jump after 'ees leetl' boat" —

"Peter doan' know how to jump," said Madame 'Arriette Dolbert, settling her rusty black about her. "Look at Peter, Monsieur Le Rat, he gettin' 'head of Lazaré widout no jumpin' at all."

"Petair ees one more large *bête* zan Lazaré," retorted Aristide; "'e jus' march softly, softly, an' do notting, but 'ees boat ees good. Mademoiselle," he added, turning to Hortense, "'ave you 'eard w'at 'as Rubier named him?"

"Yas," replied Hortense. "It de 'Gull.'"

"Did he name it faw dat gull wing in yo' hat?" cried Madame 'Arriette.

Hortense colored slightly. "I doan' reckon so," she said.

"I wouldn' like to wear a gull wing, me,"

said Madame 'Arriette. "I have always hear it was mighty bad luck to kill a gull."

"I nevah hear dat, *me*," said Hortense stoutly. "De wings is white an' pretty."

Aristide, who had been looking up the bayou, turned his sharp, weazened face upon her. "You 'ave not? Rubier cussin' now to 'ave kill zat gull."

Madame 'Arriette burst into shrill laughter. "Ah, Monsieur Le Rat!" she cried, "w'at mek yo' guess t'ings 'bout peop' like yo' do? Rubier sure is a-cussin', but he cuss a heap mo' to see the way little Peter run his boat. Look, Monsieur Le Rat!"

Madame 'Arriette was right. Even the vision of Peter marching softly and doing nothing would have been pleasanter to Rubier than the sight of Peter roused to action. The race was going badly for the "Gull." Captain Lazaré, awake to every advantage of the light, shifting breeze, was distancing Peter, while to windward of them Noel Roget slipped quietly to the fore. Noel did not jump and splash as much as Lazaré, and he attracted less attention until he gained the lead. Peter, who had been slowly and carefully trying to duplicate Lazaré's manœuvres, lost his head when Noel passed, and kept the poor "Gull" gibing and going about, first on Lazaré's, then on Noel's tack, with

all of Lazaré's sprightliness. Behind Peter trailed the fleet, reduced to the position of convoy, and interesting itself in minor competitions, but keeping keen eyes on the chief contestants. Above and around them all flashed the brilliant summer light.

Hortense on the beach was silent among the chattering watchers. They caught her glancing again and again from Peter and the "Gull" to the schooner up Porto, and the story of Rubier's folly spread. Finally Aristide approached her.

"Mademoiselle," he said, with kindly tartness, "'ave believe in ze old sailor for once. T'row me zat gull wing away out of your 'at."

Hortense raised her hand to obey, and then stopped. "Dey's anoder one," she murmured disconsolately, "Rubier got it nail' to his mas'."

Aristide pushed out his hands, as if freeing them from a man who would nail gull's wings to his mast. But the wistful eyes of Hortense had touched him, and he said:

"'E come all safe, Mademoiselle. De win' 'e blow not for ze man zat 'as kill ze gull, but I can see Rubier make remarkable progress wiz ze pole."

"Peter! Peter!" laughed the crowd. "Pick her up an' dry her!"

Peter had giped once too suddenly, and the "Gull" lay with white wings spread upon the ripples. Almost at the same moment Noel passed again on the home stretch, throwing up a shower of spray.

It was Noel's race, but every one agreed that had Rubier been there to sail the "Gull" himself things would have gone differently. While the crowd lingered to gossip a little longer on the beach, Rubier's sails up the Porto were seen to fall.

"Reckon Rubier's got tire' of polin', an' gone below faw a nap," Noel remarked jocosely to Hortense. He felt that after his victory he deserved a smile from her.

Hortense must have felt otherwise, for she kept her eyes severely on the gull's wing. At the moment of Peter's disaster she had torn it from her hat, but, remembering the one on Rubier's mast, kept it, to do with it whatever he did with his.

"Dat t'ing bring yo' bad luck, sho'," protested Noel. "Yo' had ought to bury it."

"I doan' know 'bout dat," said Hortense, turning away from him to look up the bayou again. Round Pointe Marie, at the mouth of Porto, she caught the flash of oars.

"I doan' wan' yo' to have bad luck, Hortense," Noel persisted gently, laying his

hand on the one which held the wing. "Le' me bury it."

For one moment Hortense lifted her shining eyes to his. "I ain' skeered of bad luck," she answered. Noel dropped her hand and left her.

There were only a few loiterers on Pointe St. Jacques when Rubier grounded his row-boat and sprang ashore. Even these drifted apart when the account of Peter's blundering had been given in detail, leaving Rubier and Hortense to themselves.

"T'row dat wing in de watah," he said gloomily. "I been hyar in time to race exceptin' faw dat fool gull. Batiste keep plaguin' 'bout killin' dat gull, an' I keep tellin' him, 'Yo' crazy; de clouds is full of win'; we get all we wan' prit' soon.' An' Batiste say if we wan' win' we bettah tek dat gull wing off'n de mas'. I jus' cuss Batiste an' tell him to go on polin' till de win' come; an' we pole an' we pole till I get to studyin' 'bout it, an' it look like I hadn' done nothin' but pole since I shot dat bird. By an by I got so mad a-polin' dat I tell Batiste to cast anchor, an' we lowered sails an' I t'row dat gull wing in de watah an' staht. I c'u'd see de blame t'ing a-floatin' aftah me, an' I pulled fas'. T'row away yo'rs. Dey'll go to de bottom aftah while an' we'll be done wid 'em."

But Hortense hesitated. "Somebody might pick it up befo'," she said. "I 'av' hear dat buryin' is de bes' way to get rid of it."

"Come along den, le's bury it," said Rubier, and taking her hand in his led the way to a place where the sand was deep and soft.

"I hope yo'rn don' come 'cross yo' w'en yo' staht out again," Hortense sighed, as they turned to leave.

Rubier laughed and kissed her. He was ready to defy and vanquish all bad luck.

That night Noel Roget walked moodily on Pointe St. Jacques. Something white, like an escaped toy boat, drifted toward him on the water. He waded out to it. The thing his hand caught was a gull's wing. He dropped it, then stooped for it again, took it ashore, and buried it where the sand was deep and soft; and he never knew that this was Rubier's wing, or that Rubier had ground his heel hours ago above the bad luck of Hortense.

THE GOVERNOR'S PREROGATIVES

GOVERNOR BROWN'S prerogatives were numerous and peculiar. Few governors could have exercised them without great remonstrance; but then few governors would have cared to exercise them. As a usual thing, a governor, however unscrupulous, holds himself above the temptations of a grocery store, and scorns ordering his neighbors to deprive themselves of their old clothes on his behalf. But if Governor Brown had weaknesses to which other governors are not prone, he was also exempt from many failings common to men of power. He was not given to wire-pulling or nepotism or bribery, and the prerogatives he clung to were freely granted him by his people.

Freely granted? Indeed they were, freely and smilingly granted, by all of the old inhabitants of Newton and its vicinity. But there was one man who questioned them—a bustling Northern man who, after marrying a Southern girl in the North, and bringing her back to her old home, had awakened the

whole county to stirring activity, making it a banner county of the new South as it had been of the old. This man could not understand the way in which the Governor's habits were tolerated. If he had had his way, — but fortunately even he could not go so far as that, — if he had been town marshal, for instance, the Governor would have been arrested some day, and put into any sort of custody where his various prerogatives would have been but a memory and a desire.

“There is a point where patience ceases to be a virtue,” Mr. Adams was heard to say, “and I think this town has long passed that point in its treatment of that crazy old darkey Brown. No wonder your negroes are incapable and trifling when you all join in encouraging vagabondism and petty thieving in such a way. I can't understand it. Why, even my wife, one of the most sensible women I know, used to take my trousers before they were half worn out, and give them to the Governor! What's worse, once I caught her hanging a pair over the back-garden fence, where they would be handy for him to steal. I've had to put a stop altogether to his loafing 'round our place.”

“You seem to forget that your wife's father used to own him,” said Raynes, the express agent.

"I don't see what difference that makes," Adams said.

"No, I suppose you don't; but your wife does," retorted Raynes. "Here the old fellow comes now," he added, "on time for the four o'clock train. Don't you know, Adams, that more people remember Newton for the Governor's prayers than they do for your big shipments of beans and tomatoes?"

"What's that he's singing?" Adams asked with a frown, ignoring the agent's question.

A noticeably tall, lank negro was coming down the street. The long winter overcoat he wore would have been too warm for the sultry June weather, had it not been torn and battered till the breeze ventilated it, and fluttered its fragments like streamers, much to the delight of the four yelping dogs that capered around him, led by short strings. These were the Governor's body-guard, and he was seldom seen without them. The remains of a fur cap did its best to cover his gray wool, while what he would have called his shoes made no pretence of covering his faded-looking feet. He was singing at the top of his voice, but the barking of his dogs made it difficult to understand the words. Perhaps he realized this, for when he saw Mr. Adams in the group at the station, he

gave his followers a cuff that admonished them to silence.

"Miss Hallie Howard! Miss Hallie Howard! Lives on pound cake! Lives on pound cake! Goin' to heaven!" his stentorian voice rang out.

"Good news for you, Adams," laughed Montgomery Stuart, the next largest truck farmer to Adams, as he drove up. "The Governor must have broken quarantine and been at your house again. You might as well give up; you can't keep him away from Miss Hallie."

"Miss Hallie Howard! Miss Hallie Howard! Got a bad husband! Got a bad husband!" the Governor kept on as he was passing by the group.

"You're going to wait and pray for the travelling-men, aren't you, Governor?" Raynes called out.

The old man halted.

"Bishop! Bishop! Bishop Brown!" he announced in deep staccato. "Not Governor! Bishop! Bishop Brown!" He glanced around to note the effect of this statement on the crowd. Every one was smiling except Mr. Adams, "Miss Hallie's" bad husband, who looked annoyed, and affected not to see the old man. Whereupon the new-made bishop advanced with a series of low bows,

and held out his hand to Mr. Adams in greeting.

"Take it, and get rid of him," whispered Raynes good-naturedly.

But Adams was angry, and obstinately looked the other way. The old negro continued for a few moments to offer his hand with the most winsome smiles. Then he drew back and pointed his finger at Adams, convulsing himself with silent laughter. The crowd could not hold itself; it did not want to offend the leading man of the community, but it had to guffaw. Raynes and Montgomery Stuart were the only ones who kept their faces straight and went on talking.

The whistle of the incoming train soon made a diversion. It came sweeping along as if it had forgotten to stop, then slowed up suddenly and the people streamed out. A stranger would have thought there was a surprising number of arrivals for so small a place, but the *habitués* of the platform knew that half these people had merely stepped off the train to hear the Governor pray. Some travelling-man had thrown him a coin already, and he had fallen on his knees, lifting his long bony hands and his resonant voice to heaven.

"What's he saying?" asked a man who had never seen the Governor before.

"Ask him when he's done," said the man who had tossed the coin.

"It sounds like mighty earnest praying, but I can't make out a word of it, except a 'Lord' now and then," said the new man, turning to some one else. "Can anybody understand him?"

"Nobody, unless it's the Lord," responded the other. "But don't worry about what he's saying. Hear him and watch him, won't you? It's the best nickel show you'll ever get, and don't you forget it when he passes the hat."

The old man's face worked with excitement; his voice rose entreatingly, and fell to intonations of remorse; while his long hands reached farther and farther upward, grasping wildly at the air, as if he would seize the very garments of Deity.

"All aboard!" shouted the conductor, after the long pause, in which several truckloads of fruit had been passed into the express car.

"Amen! Amen! Amen!" cried the Governor, leaping to his feet. Then, with smiles and genuflections, he presented his tattered cap to all who had not prudently retreated.

"Now's your chance," the man who had given the first money said to the new man. "Ask him what he prayed about."

"I couldn't make out quite all you said, Uncle," said the questioner, dropping a dime in the cap. "What were you praying for?"

"Praying to save you from the witches and the devil," answered the old man glibly. The gratified auditors, who had been expecting this explanation, gave a shout of laughter, in which the questioner joined as he hurried into the train.

As the crowd dispersed, Adams found himself standing by Mr. Hallam, the old Baptist minister, who had been listening in quiet amusement to the Governor's prayer. Adams looked at him in surprise.

"You here, Mr. Hallam?" he said.

"Yes; why not?" the old man asked, comprehending perfectly the reproach which Adams did not express. "It's a good thing, once in a while, to see one's self as others see one. I've been told that the Governor takes me for his model; but I tell Brother Parish I'm sure the old fellow has more the Methodist style."

Adams shook his shoulders impatiently. "Well," he said, "if you ministers don't mind being taken off like that, I suppose it would be officious for any one to interfere in your behalf."

"You've adopted our ways and converted us to yours, until there's not much difference

left between us," Mr. Hallam said, with a soothing laugh; "but there's one thing that marks you for a Northerner yet, Mr. Adams, and that is the way you call our darkies to account as if they were white men. You'll learn in time that the best of them are not exactly responsible; as for the old Governor, he has been crazy for years."

"You say they are not responsible, and yet you trust even the crazy ones at large."

"The Governor is perfectly harmless, and in a certain way we are fond of him. Can't you see that as long as we have him about, we are all of us kings with him for fool? We don't mind if our dignity suffers a little. The old fellow is healthy for us; he is shrewd enough to hit all our weaknesses."

"It's very pleasant and kind to take that forbearing view of him," Adams said, "but I feel that the community will regret its course some day. He is untrustworthy, and he's likely at any time to make trouble, either by unexpected violence or by pure lack of sense. Mrs. Adams thinks I'm hard-hearted not to let him hang 'round our place any more since we've had the children, but I tell you I don't dare to have him with them, and my mind's not easy while he's at large. I suppose I take him more seriously than other people do, because he's so devoted to my family."

"I don't think you have cause to," said the minister. "Even if the Governor were to grow violent — though he never will — he would not hurt a hair on your wife's head or touch the children. He would die like a dog for any of your father-in-law's people. I don't believe he would ever have gone crazy if the family had not broken up at the old gentleman's death. After Miss Hallie went North, sir, he just crawled into his cabin and grieved himself daft. His heart would have broken if his mind had not" — Mr. Hallam checked himself suddenly; he was growing warm, and he remembered that he had said all this before. It had done no good, to be sure; yet he felt that Adams was a kindly, well-meaning man, whom it would be useless to offend, since, after all, he could not be expected to understand.

"It is queer, isn't it," the minister resumed, "that the body stands a broken mind so much better than a broken heart? A sad illustration of that came to me the other day. I was called to see a dying woman; she was dying of heartbreak, nothing else, and it was because her husband had gone insane. He, poor man, is hale and hearty, likely to live out his years, but the doctors say he is hopelessly mad."

"I know who you mean — the Taylors,"

said Adams, and their talk drifted safely away from the Governor, who, in the meantime, was wandering down the street, while the whole town might hear that he was on his way to a camp-meeting then in progress in the next town south.

Just as the knot of people who had been waiting for the mail to be distributed scattered from the post-office Adams hurried in. Mr. Hallam, in his privileged, elderly way, had delayed him after it was evident that the mail was open; and now Adams was eager to be getting home, for the afternoon was wearing late, and there were clouds gathering. He must stir his tomato-pickers to get over the field as fast as possible, for fear the storm would catch him with ripe tomatoes on the vines. The talkative postmaster seemed to have been lying in wait for him, however.

"Heard the joke on Brother Parish?" he asked.

"No," said Adams brusquely.

"Well," said the postmaster, in the exasperating tone of one who settles to leisurely enjoyment of his own story, "well, you know Brother Parish — only being stationed here last year — don't know the Governor's ways very well, and don't like him; but he don't want to show it, so he's always trying to joke with him. Bless you, the old Governor

knows the difference as well as you or me! Well, just now Brother Parish he met the old Governor singing about going to the Gilman camp-meeting, an' he says to him, 'How's this, Governor, going to a Methodist camp-meeting? I thought you turned Baptist last week.' The old Governor just says, 'See Marse Mont' Stuart over there across the road?' An' when Brother Parish said yes, he says, 'Marse Mont' Stuart got rich tendin' to his own business, an' that's what I'm a-doing.' Some of the boys heard it, and come right up to tell. It's pretty hard to get ahead of the old man, ain't it?"

"He's an old nuisance," said Adams, laughing slightly, but feeling more than ever that Newton was unpleasantly as well as dangerously dominated by Governor Brown.

On his way home, to add to his vexation, Adams came across the Governor again. How the old man could have gotten so far north of town when he had lately heard his voice resounding so far down the south road was hard to understand. But it was useless to try to explain the Governor's presence in one place or another. He knew all the short cuts and byways, and his long legs carried him so swiftly over the ground that sometimes his guard of dogs despaired, and submitted to be dragged, fore-legs in air, rather

than to follow him at such a steady trot. People said that he brought news from the neighboring villages quicker than the telegraph could.

"Storm a-comin'! Storm a-comin'! Wild man loose! Wild man loose!" was the refrain he shouted as Adams passed. Adams, noticing an unusual eagerness in his manner, thought that the coming storm was exciting him dangerously, and reined in his horse to say:

"Don't come a step farther in this direction, Governor. You know I'll have you locked up if ever I catch you on my farm, and I'm going to be on the watch. Turn back, I tell you."

Adams's horse was a good one, and Adams put it to its best pace, yet they did not gain very fast on the Governor, who, instead of turning back, was pressing forward almost at a run.

"Storm a-comin'! Storm a-comin'!" Adams kept hearing; and then more faintly, "Wild man loose! Wild man loo—oose!" until at last a hill rose behind him and shut out the sound.

The storm was coming fast. The whole sky was overcast, but full of dazzling, diffused light. Under its strange brightness the trees and grass, the green crops in the fields, and

even the brown earth seemed to shine with a yellowish lustre of their own. Behind a broad stretch of forest that bordered one side of the road the clouds were gathering more densely, and one of them which showed above the treetops was the only dark thing in the world. A moment after it first came in sight it was moving swiftly up the sky — a broad, sinister bar of indigo, bordered with a lashing fringe of white.

Adams leaned forward, urging his horse into a run. The first gust of the wind rushed past him as he sprang down at his own gate; but he scarcely felt it, for there, running down the road through his orchard, came his wife, screaming something he could not understand.

“The children! the children!” he heard, as he hurried to meet her. “We’ve searched the whole place. Come back to the Taylor woods.”

Adams turned his horse, and lifted his wife into the wagon.

“How long ago?” he asked.

“I don’t know how long. I thought Mammy Jane had them, and she thought they were with me. When we missed them we called the men, and we all searched high and low, through the orchards, everywhere. The only places Mammy ever takes them to

are Stuart's and the Taylor woods. I sent the men 'cross lots to the woods, and Mammy's gone to Stuart's. I thought perhaps they might have come this way to meet you."

The wind was upon them. In the open space that lay between their gate and the Taylor woods the unbroken strength of the gale almost lifted them from the wagon. Standing up for a moment to look around him, Adams saw his gang of workmen reach the edge of the woods, pause a moment, listening to the great roar through the trees, and then, to a man, turn and run back through the open toward the farm. He shouted fiercely at them, but the wind took the words from his mouth.

A moment more, and Adams was in the lee of the woods himself. He reined in his horse. In the apparent lull made by the shelter it was possible to think in spite of the turmoil among the branches. Husband and wife looked into each other's eyes despairingly. Only a miracle could guide them to their children through this wild storm, in which they could hardly catch the sound of their own voices. Yet they must search.

They jumped to the ground, but before they could enter the woods a strange rum-

bling, grinding sound rose above the roar of thrashing branches and creaking tree-trunks. The new sound grew louder and more dreadful, until Adams and his wife clung close to each other in fear, while the frightened horse wheeled suddenly, leaped free from harness and wagon, and plunged wildly back over the road towards home. Then, not a hundred feet from where the man and woman stood, the solid ranks of the forest broke apart, gave way before a whirling blast of dust, broken branches, and uprooted trees. They watched it march across the fields, dropping part of its burden as it went, only to gather up new victims in its terrific arms.

With blanched faces and numb hearts the two watchers hastened toward the gap in the forest to look down the track of the cyclone. It was as if some great scythe had mown a path through the woods to the open fields beyond. The space was a little wider than a city street, but in it scarcely the semblance of a tree was left erect. Some had been twisted off in the middle; some were uprooted, lying their full length on the ground, and tangling the limbs that had not been shorn from them with the broken branches of other trees.

Down this wild road the father and mother started, peering under logs, clam-

bering through treetops, calling, and listening with strained ears; for the storm had lost its heart, and they could hope to hear.

"Amen! Amen! Amen!" The words reached them faintly. "Get back, devil! Get back, devil! Amen! Amen!" — until the old Governor leaped out from the woods into the high road of the storm. There was a screaming of shrill child-voices and a yelping of distracted dogs; but, above it all, above even the Governor's shouts and the rustling of the wind, there came a fierce howl, as another figure burst through the underbrush close in the Governor's track.

"Miss Hallie's children! Miss Hallie's children! Got 'em safe, Miss Hallie! Got 'em safe, Miss Hallie! Amen! O Lord, amen!" the old man shouted, as he rushed along the mad course before him, deftly slipping under and past the obstructing branches, and dodging from the grasp of the man behind, who was plunging straight through the jungle of roots and limbs, his garments shredded from him, and his flesh torn.

On they came, — the madman always within reach of the Governor, always eluded by him, — crawling under uplifted roots, vaulting over tree-trunks, tearing aside the lowered curtains of vines; while, far in the

rear, the Governor's dogs whined piteously behind some barrier they could not scale.

"Got 'em safe, Miss Hallie! Got 'em safe, Miss Hallie!" the Governor kept shouting; but where he had them the parents did not know until the old man bounded up to them, unbuttoned his long coat, dropped the children in their arms, and faced his pursuer, beating him off with the great shattered branch of a tree. Then back they turned, the Governor in chase; and when Adams looked up from his babies they were vanishing far down the narrow swath of the cyclone.

"I've never gotten it out of him yet," Adams often says; "he won't tell how he knew that Taylor had escaped from his keeper, or that my children were in the woods. All he'll say is that it was Taylor's woods, and he knew Taylor wouldn't want any stray children there. But I know one thing, and that is that I never heard any prayer that lifted me so straight to heaven as the Governor's did when I caught up to him. He had that wild man down, and was kneeling on his breast, giving thanks to the Lord."

"What did he say, Adams?" Raynes, the express-agent, likes to ask.

"If you don't know what the Governor says when he prays, I can't tell you," Adams answers; "but it means enough to Miss

Hallie and me for us to have the old man pray for us regularly once a day. Miss Hallie spoke once of omitting it when we had some Northern friends visiting us, but I told her that to act as our chaplain was one of the Governor's prerogatives."

THE MOUNTAIN GOLD

I.

FAR up the mountain-side a hands-breadth of clearing broke into the forest. In the daytime a thread of wood smoke rose out of it, pale against the sky, and marked it from a distance, but after sundown the place was lost in the great black shadow of the peak, unless one went near enough to see the little cabin outlined vividly against the darkness by the firelit chinks in the thick log walls and a red flare of light from its open door.

One night in early spring, when the air was soft from a whole day's sunshine and sweet with the smell of all the things which were beginning to grow in the woods, a swaying torch came out from between the trees and crossed the field. A half-grown girl was carrying the torch, and a slightly smaller girl clung to her other hand. Within the flickering circle of brightness in which they moved there was a core of shadow at their feet, and they came stumbling through it over the un-

even ground, now on the crest and now in the trough of a newly-made furrow, but guiding themselves always toward the glowing framework of the low black cabin.

"Hit allus 'pears ter me at night 's if we-uns lived in er sort er cage," the younger girl said as she scrambled to keep up with the freer pace of her sister. "Don't hit look like hit war thes plumb made outen cracks?"

"Good enough fer beastises like we-uns," the older girl answered sharply, "livin' plumb wild up hyar on the mounting an' keepin' a lookout all the time like critters that's 'feard er bein' run down er shot. I can't see why pap ever sold out the store in the Holler an' traipsed up hyar."

"Projecty, projecty," the younger girl answered wisely; "thes so projecty he couldn't set still an' prosper—that's what mammy uster say."

"Well, he's cert'nly boun' to be spied out an' cotched some er these times," the older girl declared. "I wisht pap had some sense."

"Oh, Ducie!" the small sister exclaimed, in a protesting voice, "look like you-uns is mighty cross 'ith pap to-night."

The older girl stuck her torch into the moist earth and extinguished it, for they

were almost at the cabin door. "I ain't cross 'ith pappy hisse'f, Rinth," she explained; "I'm on'y mad at his plumb silliness."

A dog came bounding out, welcoming them with soft "woofs" of joy. The cabin was silent except for the crackling of the fire, and as they went inside the girls fell silent, too. Rinth poured the new milk out of the bucket she had been carrying, washed the bucket, and hung it on a peg. Ducie put the brands which had fallen at the sides of the fire back into its centre, and the renewed blaze flooded the small, bare room with gold. Ducie's sunburned yellow hair caught a glow from it, her brown cheeks took a richer coloring in its light, and her blue eyes sparkled back to it as she leaned a moment by the fireplace looking into the flames. Rinth came and stood beside her—she was smaller and slighter, and had a way of looking at Ducie while Ducie looked at other things. Afterward Rinth remembered just what Ducie told her about them better than she ever remembered what she had seen herself.

"You-uns ain't no call to set yorese'f up fer knowin' more'n pap do," she remonstrated softly.

"Pshaw! I ain't er studyin' 'bout'n that no more," Ducie answered. "I'm thes lettin'

on to myse'f what we-uns'd do if we went back ag'in to live in the Holler."

The dog had stretched his paws and nose to the fire and was blinking into it. Suddenly he pricked up his ears. The girls had heard nothing but their own voices, the fire, and the murmuring of the tree-tops, but as they listened closer they heard a faint "Halloo!" upon the breeze. Rinth caught her sister's hand. "Hit's *them*," she said.

"Hollerin' to let theirse'ves be knowed?" Ducie asked ironically. "I 'low hit's some of the folkses from the Holler comin' up an' speakin' beforehand to let us be sure they's friends."

The call sounded again and again, growing louder with each repetition, and soon the dog rushed out, barking wildly, into the darkness.

"There, there, old boy," a stranger's voice said pacifically, "you needn't be afraid of me and I'm not afraid of you — that's it, good old fellow."

The dog gave a few sharp friendly yelps and submitted to the stranger's hand upon his head. The girls stood shrinking in the doorway. They could hear the tread of two men. "Bounce!" Ducie called out, "Bounce!"

Bounce had the name of being a savage

dog, but he came wagging up between the strangers with entire disregard for his reputation. "He's all right. I've made friends with him," one of the men said. "He came across us in the woods to-day and I gave him part of my dinner, so he hasn't forgotten us— My! you two children aren't all by yourselves here, are you? Where are your folks?"

He had come as far as the doorway, and was staring in at the meagre loneliness which he had expected to find peopled by a big mountain family, even though there were but two heads at the door. Ducie and Rinth stood huddled together like rabbits startled by an unexpected sound. Mountain children are all shy, but these girls had fear underneath their shyness. "Where are your folks?" the stranger repeated. "We've lost ourselves up here in the woods, and we want to stay all night."

Ducie's lips parted. She looked quickly behind her and around her, as if the place had grown unfamiliar and she was not sure but there was some other opening than the doorway, which was half filled by the two men; suddenly she sprang past them, pulling Rinth after her; the men could hear the swift touches of their bare feet as they flew from furrow to furrow in the dark.

The one who had not spoken began to laugh. "You have a taking way with these mountain people, Hodges," he said.

"So it seems," the other answered, walking into the cabin. "Anyhow, we'll stay and see what happens next."

At the edge of the clearing Ducie sank down among the bushes, and Rinth almost fell beside her. They were breathless from alarm, and at first they only held each other tight and listened to the beating of their hearts and the mysterious movements among the trees. Bounce had not followed them, but whether he was staying behind as faithful guardian of the house or out of interest in his new acquaintances the girls could not tell. It seemed evident at last that no one was coming after them. "Rinth," said Ducie cautiously, though Rinth was crouching close against her.

"Oh, Ducie!" Rinth whispered, "we can go to pap, now cain't we?"

"I wisht we hadn't run," Ducie said. "Running like that, hit look like we got some sort er place to run to, an' 'ith Bounce there so kind an' friendly they could start out an' track us whensoever they took the notion."

Both girls were trembling from head to foot. "Look like hit war mean er Bounce

not to tell us he'd met up 'ith furreigners in the woods," Rinth said with a sob.

"Hit war — powerful mean," Ducie agreed. "He could er let on, somehow, stiddier carryin' on so innercent."

"Maybe he disremembered," Rinth suggested. She did not like to have even Bounce held up for judgment.

"Disremembered!" Ducie said, and then they were quiet until she rose slowly to her feet. "We *got* ter, Rinth," she whispered.

"Got ter what?" Rinth asked. "Oh, Ducie, we-uns could jes' stay hyar all night an' let they-uns do what they wanted ter by their-se'ves."

"That'd be a good way ter take keer of pap," Ducie said. "I ain't mindin' if pap don't have no sense, I ain't er goin' ter have him cotched when I can go back an' say, like he allus tole us, that he's off er coon-huntin', but they is powerful welcome ter stay and have their suppers an' sleep in the loft."

Ducie was still frightened, but she stepped resolutely into the open, and, with Rinth holding tight and drawing back on her hand, they crossed the ploughed ground again to the cabin. The light flared out as before, and there was silence. They stood shuddering for a long time, covered by the shadow.

Then Ducie leaned out and peered round the edge of the doorway. The men were tilted back in the old splint-bottomed chairs, gazing into the fire. Bounce sat between them, cocking an ear now in one direction and now in another, with an affectation of vigilance, but he had not noticed the coming of the girls. Either his head had been turned by these strangers or he was growing deaf. Ducie spoke to him, for he was the only one of whom she was not afraid.

"Bounce!" she ventured.

The man named Hodges looked up quickly. "Don't mind us," he said; "come in."

The children sidled into the house, and little by little as the strangers talked to them they lost their shyness and went about their work without constraint. Ducie mixed the batter for hoe-cakes and set some bacon to sizzling; Rinth made coffee in a battered, flame-blackened pot over the fire. The strangers asked many questions while they watched the progress of the meal and while they were eating it; but, though it seemed to them very unnatural for two girls to be all alone like this in an isolate mountain-cabin, they could learn little about them except that their mother was dead and that they lived with their father, and grew small patches of cotton and corn and tobacco in the open

space around them, and that their father was fond of hunting and stayed out with his gun pretty nearly night and day. Of the store, and their old home in the Hollow, and their discontent with their father the children did not speak.

When the men had eaten their supper they climbed into the loft, and they were not surprised at hearing the ladder softly taken away after they had stopped talking. They had grown used to the mountain people, and they knew that "foreigners" were never trusted, no matter how kindly they might be received.

In the morning they found the ladder in its place. Bacon and corn-bread and coffee were in progress again as they came down into the room, but Ducie raised a flushed face from the fire and made a motion for silence, pointing to a bed in one corner where a man lay sleeping heavily. She gave them their breakfast and then they followed her outside. Rinth and Bounce were taking care of the cow at the edge of the clearing, but Ducie seemed less timid than when they were with her. In daylight her face was browner and her hair more faded by the sun, but there was something remarkably independent in the poise of her head and in her bright, uncommunicative blue eyes.

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"What is you-uns doin' up hyar on the mounting?" she asked.

"Prospecting," answered Hodges.

"Hunting, like your father," said the other man.

"You'd better bring a gun along before you talk about hunting, Burnham," laughed Hodges. "We're prospecting for mines."

Burnham shrugged his shoulders and slung over them the bag which he had brought the night before. "This is a still hunt," he answered good-naturedly.

Ducie's face did not change a muscle, but her eyes brightened. "If you-uns is revenue officers huntin' for er still," she said, leaning toward them eagerly, "I've hearn tell that thar's one hid in the rocks above Blount's Cove, over t'other side of the mounting."

Hodges looked her keenly in the face. "Thank you," he said, "we'll remember."

Ducie's eyes fell. "I hadn't ort to have tole you," she faltered, and a quick blush spread up over her face.

There was no still in the rocks above Blount's Cove, and the lie shamed her, though she had told it to protect her father. She did not realize that the strangers saw straight through it, knowing that the mountain people do not betray each other.

"So the old man is a moonshiner,"

Hodges guessed, as they walked out of hearing. "I fancied it was some such outfit from the start."

"Lucky for them we're not revenue men," Burnham chuckled. "But if we don't strike what looks like a paying vein to-day I'll be ready to give the whole thing up."

II.

When Rinth came back from her milking Ducie was still looking at the spot in the woods into which the men had vanished. "Rinth," she said, "I'm goin' to talk to pappy when he's er ploughin', an' don't you try to put in no word or say nothin', 'cause hit won't do no good."

"What you goin' to say to him, Ducie?" Rinth asked.

Their father came shuffling out of the cabin, scarcely awake and half-blinded by the sun. "Hitch up the jinney, Duce," he ordered, trying to open his eyes to the glittering light which brimmed to the very top of the clearing and sparkled on the upper edges of the forest, seeming to shine from the whole dazzling surface of blue sky and shimmering clouds. "Rinthy, child," he added, shading his forehead and looking

down at her, "fix pappy his breakfas' an' then we'll thes wrastle into that thar cotton-patch an' finish plantin' hit to-day. 'Tain't allus that you-uns'll have to tromp behind a plough, strewin' cotton-seed, an' when Hank Jerdon says a thing, Rinth, you can bank on hit. Yes," he muttered again, with a lurking smile, "that's the word — you can bank on hit."

A half hour later he was guiding the donkey and plough round and round a knoll at the edge of the clearing, keeping the furrow at a water-level, as they always do in ploughing hilly ground in the South. The girls followed him, flinging cotton-seed on to the freshly-turned red earth. It was a silent procession, for the father was still tired and sleepy. Ducie kept her face hidden in her sunbonnet, and Rinth looked away from them both as much as possible. After a long time Ducie spoke.

"Pap," she said stoically, "the revenue men is after you-uns. They slep' in the loft las' night an' I lied to 'em an' sent 'em over to Blount's Cove lookin' for er still this mornin'."

Hank Jerdon dropped the plough-handles, and if Ducie had seen his face her own would have been less troubled as she scattered out the seed. "The revenue men?" he said

slowly, while surprise, amusement, and a sort of cunning pleasure followed one another through his eyes. "Git erlong, you jinney!" he shouted, "git erlong!" Taking up the handles he jerked the plough back for a fresh start. "You're a mighty peart child," he went on over his shoulder to Ducie, "but them thar officers'll be powerful dumb if they don't suspicion that you-uns is so free to tell bout'n a still at Blount's Cove thes to get 'em off the scent of one this side the mounting."

"Oh, pap!" Ducie cried out in alarm. Her father said nothing, and she crept along after him, strewing the seed to right and left with hands that trembled, while her eyes saw nothing but wretchedness. A burning disgust for herself and her stupid lie paled into fear of what might happen from it. She wished she could burst into tears and beg her father to forgive her, because she had thought she had more sense than he, and had not wakened him to talk to the strangers; but Ducie was not of a nature to which tears could come; and, though her throat ached and her eyes burned, she could only walk doggedly on, strewing the cotton-seed and thinking such cruel things to herself that she had to set her lips not to say them aloud. Once she felt Rinth's hand tugging at her

dress, but she shook the hand off, and then she hated herself, because she knew that Rinth would cry at having been pushed away.

"Pappy," she broke out, in a smothered voice that startled her, for she did not know that she was going to speak, "won't you thes leave that thar still whar it stan's in the cave, an' go back ag'in inter the Holler whar we was all so satisfied?" She had wanted to ask it so long that to hear the words on her lips was a relief, and she gathered courage from them. "Oh, pappy," she cried vehemently, out of the shelter of her drooping bonnet, "hit ain't no good to live this er-way, thes for the sake er one ole still that you-uns is so shamed er that you ain't never owned up to us that hit's that in the cave. What good is hit doin' to we-uns? Is we powerful rich an' proud up hyar whar we don't see nobody onct a year, an' when we sees 'em we's skeered? Why cain't we move back to the Holler, an' live the way other folkses do, an' have good times? Even little Rinthy, she gits lonesome up hyar by ourse'ves day an' night 'ith nothin' but the trees and the wild critters prowlin' about an' the hoot-owls to keep us peart an' happy."

Her father had been chuckling to himself when she began, but his face turned grave as he listened. "Duce," he said, "if you-uns

has yore hearts so set on the Holler, I 'most wish I'd never set eyes on that thar cave an' all that's in hit; but maybe the revenue men'll hunt it out an' save me the trouble of gettin' rid of hit. S'pose you'd be proud to have 'em, sence you're so ashamed er what yore pappy does up thar?"

"Oh, pappy," Rinth put in, with a tearful voice, "Ducie ain't 'shamed er you, she's thes" —

"Be still, Rinth," said Ducie miserably; and they worked on without another word, while the sun moved slowly across the open sky, and Ducie's head swam with visions of the revenue men hunting out the trail and the cave. Her father would despise her after this. He had always liked Rinth best, because Rinth never opposed him, and now Ducie felt that his last patience with her would be gone. She wondered why he did not start out and try to keep the men from finding the cave, but he only ploughed on, and once in a while she heard him laugh a queer, dry laugh to himself.

At eleven o'clock they unhitched the donkey and went back to the cabin to get their dinner and rest until two. The mountain people take long hours for their nooning, and Hank always went to sleep after he had eaten. As soon as he was stretched upon

the bed Ducie patted Bounce, and they went softly out of the cabin. Rinth looked up wistfully, but Ducie shook her head, and the smaller girl had to sit down by herself in the sunshine, and wonder why Ducie was hurrying off so fast into the woods.

At the place where the strangers had passed out of sight a few crushed plant-stems marked the direction they had taken, and Bounce ran eagerly ahead, snuffing with his nose to the ground, and leading the way down from the spur of the ridge into a ravine where ledges of slate and schist jutted out through the rich greenery, and overhung a little stream that was shaded by dogwoods and half lost in fern. In places along this stream there was much trampling, and fresh tracks led back from it where bits of rock had been broken out and pounded. Ducie wondered at these places, but she did not stop, for Bounce plunged on and on along the gurgling run until Ducie's heart began to come up into her throat; she knew that this stream would flow into another, whose source was in her father's cave. Which way would the men have taken, toward the cave or down the new ravine?

Bounce went so excitedly now that she had to run to keep near him. The briars tore her, and she bruised her feet as she leaped

from stone to stone. She did not smell the young hickory leaves that brushed against her, nor see the fresh, tempting growth of sassafras; she simply strained her eyes forward as if she expected to see the men still standing at the turning of the ways. Bounce reached the cave stream before her, sniffed the air a moment, and turned toward the cave.

Ducie stood still, balanced on a stone and trying to catch her breath; a weight seemed pressing her, against which her heart could scarcely beat. "I set 'em on the track," she thought; "I set 'em on the track er pore pap's cave." In the instant's pause she heard a hammer ringing out on something hard, and she realized that she had been hearing it more faintly as she ran. "Are they er-breakin' up the still?" she gasped.

Springing forward again, she ran straight up the rough bed of the stream, rather than fight her way through the undergrowth. Bounce was barking with keen, faithless delight. She heard the voice of Hodges welcoming him: "Good old fellow, found us out again — good boy!"

Ducie turned an angle of the stream and came upon them. They were bending down and washing something in a pan. The entrance of the cave was only a few rods

away, a black hole among the bushes, but they did not seem to see it or to know.

"You — you sha'n't go no further!" Ducie cried, rushing past them and standing breathless in the stream, the water coming nearly to her knees, her arms outspread.

"Well!" Burnham said, dropping his pan upon the bank and straightening up in wonder.

Hodges went near to her with a kindly look. "My poor child, what do you think we are doing?" he asked.

"You're — revenue — officers," Ducie panted.

"What do these things have to do with revenue officers?" he asked again. "I told you the simple truth this morning: we are prospecting for gold."

Ducie put her hand to her head and turned to clamber up the bank. "Gold!" she murmured, "up in this hyar mounting — gold?"

Hodges helped her and steadied her a moment. "Yes," he answered, "gold; and at last we seem to have struck a paying vein."

"But hit ain't yourn," a man's voice said sharply, behind them. They turned and saw Hank Jerdon coming out through the undergrowth. "This land's mine, and for two

year I been workin' out the gold in that thar cave."

"Pappy!" Ducie cried, starting to run to him. She stopped half way and her head fell. "Oh, pappy, I been er-faultin' you-uns all this time when you was on'y diggin' gold!"

The rude keenness of the mountaineer's face softened a little. He went to the child and patted her clumsily on her bare tangled head.

"Look here," Burnham said to him, "I've seen men washing out gold all by themselves in these mountains, and they never made more than a few dollars a day; don't you want to sell us an interest in your land here, and let us put in a little machinery?"

Jerdon looked him over cautiously. "An' so yore interest in revenue war in the form of gold," he said, gaining time while he thought.

"We've heard about this mountain gold for years," Hodges explained, "and we've known people who came down here and got up big companies and failed, but we've made up our minds that there's some little money in it, and if this belongs to you we'd like to buy you out or take a share."

Ducie caught her father's hand and clung to it for all the world as if she were little

Rinth. The sunlight shifted and flickered on her upturned face. "Oh, pap, an' then we-uns could move back to the Holler!" she pleaded.

"I've done a heap er projectin' 'bout'n that thar gold," Hank Jerdon answered, staring at the ground, "but when all's said, I was on'y studyin' to git mo' money fer you an' Rinty, an' hit ain't been much fun er workin' hit by myse'f." He stopped awhile, and when he looked up at the men his face was twitching. The gold that he had guarded as a secret hope was very hard to share. "I'll have to have some reference that you-uns is straight an' hones'," he said, "an' after that I'll sell you a half pardnership in this hyar vein. Yes, Ducie, an' you-uns can live in the Holler if you admire to, or any place else, I reckon" —

Ducie gave a hard, tearless sob. Her father's face lighted up whimsically. "So! so!" he said, stroking her down as if she were a nervous colt. "That's all right, Ducie, I got a little mad 'ith you-uns fer thinkin' you knowed more'n I did when we moved up hyar, an' that's the reason er my never lettin' on bout'n the gold. Hit war plumb sneakin' er me, honey, but I war tickled 'mos' to death whenever you-uns got to worryin' over that thar still what I ain't never

had. But hit's all right, though I've projected a mighty sight whilst I war workin' all alone in that thar cave."

But Ducie sank down beside Bounce, who had come slinking in between them. "Oh, I been er faultin' you-uns an' pappy," she moaned, hugging him tight in her remorse and joy; "I kep' er faultin' everybody when Rinth said I hadn't no call to, an' you-uns war thes er doin' yore bes' to let on to me that hit war all 'bout'n innercent diggin' fer gold!"

THE ALARM BELL

LEAVES drifted over the old Walden house as if they were hushing it, though there was very little life in it to hush. They lay in red and yellow scrolls across the porches, they flecked the gabled roof and brimmed the mossy eave-troughs, fluttering down from them like the last drops of a shower which the clearing breeze wafts as they fall.

Lorraine Walden had been standing on the south porch and looking out until it seemed as if another falling leaf would break her heart. The leaves rose now and then and moved from place to place in little whispering flights, and sometimes an eddy of them danced clear across the yard between the straight gray tree-trunks, and out of sight down the long slope toward the bluff. For one last moment the west shone out in a golden brightness, and then the hills shut off the sun. It was the most silent of autumn twilights. Lorraine could hear the rattle and creak of wagons passing in the road, and

she wished that any living soul would think of her and come walking in through the leaves which lay knee deep in the sunken pathway to the gate. She remembered when she herself had first come along that path. Abby had met her at the door almost without a word, but Great-grandmother Walden, lying waxen white up in her bed, had reached out a thin hand to her, and had called her by a name that was not hers. Perhaps it was years and perhaps it was centuries ago. Old Abby and Grandmother Walden were the same to-day as they were then, and Lorraine told herself with a shudder that they would still be the same after she was dead. She smiled a little at the thought of dying. "At least," she told herself, "if I were to do that there would be no one to keep Abby from ringing the alarm bell, and that would be a change."

The bell hung above her with a year's growth of grape vine tangling its cord. If she were to ring it now the people from the road and from all the farms near by would come running in to ask her what had happened, and she would tell them that she was lonely, that was all. She raised her hand and softly clasped it round the cord, and laid her cheek against her hand. A tremor passed through the swathing of leaves and tendrils,

and the great bell answered with a dim, half-wakened tone.

Lorraine had not meant to ring the bell. She dropped the cord and ran swiftly in doors to see if her grandmother had been frightened by its soft, unexpected "lan."

The mistress and the care-taker were sleeping, and neither of them had heard. Abby's white head was bowed upon her breast, and her arms hung relaxed along the arms of her chair. She was so deep in unconsciousness that she did not notice Lorraine's entrance, but Grandmother Walden awakened, and, lifting her head a little, seemed to listen while her lips parted into a sympathetic smile. Perhaps the note of the bell had reached her without her knowledge, or perhaps she was hearkening to the echo of some much more distant sound, for her sleep was so light and flitting that she passed constantly back and forth, scarcely feeling the transition through the open door of dreams.

Lorraine laid her hand on Abby's shoulder and roused her to go away for her time of rest. Grandmother Walden turned with unusual alertness and took note of the new face.

"Is that you, Sibyl? I'm thankful that you've come," she said. "They've been having some very old, feeble person sitting

here beside me, and she seemed to sleep the best part of the time."

Her head sank into the pillows and her own eyes closed again, but soon she opened them. "Sibyl," she began in her faint reminiscent voice, "I've been thinking of the day the bells rang for Roger Foxhall's wedding. Do you remember? Every one called them the bells of joy."

At most times Lorraine would have acquiesced. Just now it was part of her discontent to lean forward and say softly, but clearly, "I think, mother, that I was not yet born." She had fallen into a way of answering according to the name which was given her, and even now she said "mother" from habit, and then sighed bitterly, feeling that every effort to escape from the past was useless when she had grown into one of its ghosts. Sibyl was her Great-grandmother Walden's daughter, her own young grandmother, dead these fifty years. More than one daughter and granddaughter and even great-granddaughter had lived their lives to an end in caring for Grandmother Walden, and still her pale existence flickered on in the room that looked to the east across the hills. She had been very kindly and very patient — patient even with the tragic length of days which gave her so much mourning.

But grief had all gone by. The dead lived in reversed succession as her failing mind turned backward to the past, and one after another Lorraine bore all their names. Sibyl was very quaint and sweet — she liked it rather best of all. She rose and began to walk to and fro across the room, pausing once at the bedside to repeat, "It was before I was born, mother. I don't remember any bells of joy."

The old woman sighed in her turn, but softly. "It is my poor memory," she said. "The days pass and the years pass, and it is very hard to remember when things were. Now that you speak of it, I recollect that you were only a baby in my arms. Such a pretty baby, Sibyl, — the prettiest child I ever had. Your father told me that you favored me."

"I think I did, mother," Lorraine answered, looking at the face on the pillow and then into a mirror at her own face. In the monochrome of twilight they were of the same luminous pallor. She gazed at herself for a while as a friend who knew the story of the house might have gazed at her, and then, leaning forward, she kissed the wan girl whom she pitied so, and the touch of the glass was like the touch of her grandmother's lips.

"It was this way," said Grandmother Walden, in whose mind the images had grouped

themselves at last. "I can recall now just how it was. Roger Foxhall lived over on the east side of the country, twenty miles away, and he was a good man. Yes," she went on, with a queer tone of partisanship creeping into her weak voice, "there were those who didn't believe it at one time, but I was always satisfied that Roger Foxhall walked just in the path that God had laid aside for him to walk. I told my uncle so when he was the most bitterly set against him. 'You'll live to thank God,' I said, 'for having made your daughter love so good a man.' And Roger Foxhall knew that I had spoken for him." The old voice trembled to the verge of tears at some remembered sign of gratitude, and then it sank into a whisper which Lorraine could not follow unless she bent her ear. Roger Foxhall—it was a name she had not heard before, and there was a vital sound about it, but she knew that somewhere now it was written on a gravestone, and that knowledge was enough. She began moving soundlessly about the room, lighting the shaded lamp and laying a single stick of wood upon the fire which had sunk into a bed of coals.

Grandmother Walden's thread of story broke in two. "Sibyl!" she called, "there's a strange light sprung on to the ceiling!"

"Only the lamp-light, mother," Lorraine answered, as she had answered every evening since she came. "And there isn't any smell of smoke either, mother," she went on, "and everything is safe."

Grandmother Walden stared up at the ceiling with a look of unbelief. The dread of fire had long ago become a fixed idea to her helplessness, and all her other thoughts went circling in a wandering orbit round it, and were ruled by it. "It is a very strange light," she said again, and still she lay staring up at it until her memories crept back like kindly shadows and her story murmured on.

Lorraine turned to the window and, drawing the curtain behind her, looked out against the night, which was falling solid now and dark, except for the few stars that glimmered above the black massing of the trees. She could hear her grandmother's voice rise once in a while and fall again, and sometimes her ears caught words or sentences which did not enter to her brain. The love of service for the mere sake of serving, the tenderness which had seemed to be a part of her nature and had made the time pass peacefully enough until this mood, now dropped away from her like a garment, and her soul found itself thin and naked and shivering in the loneliness of night.

She did not know how long she stood there. It seemed as if the world had turned, and had shown her every side of the empty universe many times, before a great flake of brightness sailed through the air above her and disappeared among the trees. She watched it idly, yet with a certain interest because it was so different from the dark. Another flake came following it, and then another, and then a flickering burst of light touched all the trees. Lorraine came to herself with her hand pressed tight against her heart, and ran silently out of the room, down the stairs, and out-of-doors.

A pillar of flame rose from the west chimney where the kitchen wing joined the main body of the house, and the burning soot mounted out of the flame and then settled slowly through the almost stirless air, burning on like great red glow-worms on the roof and in the grass. The roar of the fire in the chimney surged in the girl's ears, and she ran toward the bell. But with her hand on the cord — as it had been so short a time before — her own warnings to Abby stopped her short before she rang. Abby had grown childish and nervous, so that she would have rushed to sound alarm whenever a mouse ran across the floor through the silence or a brand shattered in the fireplace, if Lorraine

had not been there to guard the bell. And Lorraine had guarded it until the impulse changed to habit, and the habit to a superstition that whenever the bell rang her grandmother would die—for it would take no more than the clashing of a bell to outweigh the even balance between life and death.

She stood with her arm lifted, trembling between two fears. It was only a burning chimney—but there was her grandmother helpless in her bed, and Abby, who would scarcely be of greater aid if this soft rain of brightness caught the gray old shingles or the drifting leaves. The flame-lit trees glowed ruddier than by daylight, and now it was scintillating fire which they seemed to shed. Lorraine took a deep breath, tightening her hold upon the rope. Once more the bell murmured plaintively, and then she dropped the cord. Low and metrical and solemn, through the stillness she heard the hoof-beats of a horse.

There was scarcely need to run down the deep path to the gate when such a beacon of danger was flaring from the chimney-top, but Lorraine ran, calling out into the dark. The galloping horse stopped within reach of her hand; a man sprang down and fastened the hitching-strap around the gate-post while

she opened the gate for him silently. He came through, and the flicker of the mounting flame showed him tall and strong.

"Are you alone here?" he asked in a stranger's voice.

"As far as help goes," Lorraine said, keeping abreast of his stride along the path. "My grandmother is ill upstairs, and there is an old housekeeper. Neither of them knows about the fire, and I hope they will not have to, for it would frighten them almost to death."

"Show me where your well is, and bring me all the quilts and blankets that you have," the stranger said. "A ladder," he added, when Lorraine had brought him load after load of bedding and he had drenched it at the well.

"Here," she answered, and led the way. He ran up the ladder and spread the dripping blankets out upon the roof, while Lorraine climbed up and down, fetching more for him until the last one had been spread. Strength and life rose in her, making her feet swift and her muscles tireless. When she had carried all the blankets she walked over them up the steep pitch of the roof with as unerring a step as the stranger, and they looked together to see if the timbers through which the chimney passed were likely to take fire.

"All right for the present," the man said, and they stood still for a moment watching the undiminished volume of flame roll out above them. Its heat burned their faces, and its light showed them to each other — young, resolute, of the kind that one may trust.

He started down the roof, holding out an arm to make a bar if she should slip. "I see that you are afraid of nothing," he said.

"I am sure-footed to-night," Lorraine answered, but her hand was trembling as he took it to help her over the crumbling eave-trough until she was safe upon the ladder.

"We shall manage this," he said earnestly. "There is very little danger now; it can just burn on."

"Oh, I know!" Lorraine said. "I am not at all afraid."

She hurried down on to the south porch to listen for the sound of her grandmother's slender stick striking upon the floor beside her bed. Grandmother Walden's hands were feeble, and the stick was old and light and dry, for it had been tied there at the bedside before Lorraine was born; and yet the hollow, silent house took up the tap, tap, tap, of her summons, and carried it from room to room whenever she wished for anything, or if she noticed that she had been left alone. Some-

times its message reached Lorraine when she had wandered out among the trees into the farthest part of the great yard. The fallen leaves rustled about her as she ran swiftly back, and she felt that she was spirit answering spirit in some dumb language of the dead. She had never been upon the roof before. She did not know if she could have heard the tapping there, and Abby's dim ears might not have heard. There was no sound upon the porch, but to be quite certain she went up to the door. It opened into silence, darkness, and an outpouring smoke that made her gasp.

The stranger came up, and they went inside. "It is only smoke yet," he said quietly. "Thank Heaven! I cannot see my way." And yet he walked through the house as if he knew its turnings, for the roar of the chimney guided him. In the kitchen the smoke was still more dense, but there was no flame, only a reflected glow from above which shone out through the stove. Lorraine lighted a lamp, and they could see the smoke pouring down through the cracks of the wooden ceiling which shut off a loft under the slant of the roof.

"Is there any way to get in there?" the stranger asked, pointing up.

"None," said Lorraine. "It is a closed

space." The tears were brimming in her eyes from the smoke, and her face looked ashen through it."

"Then I must make a way," he said. "Either a defect in the flue is letting out the smoke, or else the dry wood is beginning to burn. Get me an axe and then bring water in everything you can carry."

He brought the ladder, leaned it against the wall, and took the axe. Lorraine was gathering pails for water. "Ought I to ring for more help?" she asked. "I am afraid it would kill my grandmother to hear the bell."

He stopped half way between floor and ceiling and looked down into her face, measuring what cause she had for such a fear. What he saw was the overstrain and weirdness of long watching. "At least," he said, "we will wait until I have cut through into the loft. You and I can do a great deal to put out a fire by ourselves."

She took two water-pails and ran from the room. "It is not time yet," she said as she drew the water swiftly. "It is not time yet to ring the bell." The words had come into her head from nowhere, and they sang themselves over and over as she ran back and forth with the full water-pails and the empty ones. The axe rang out against the seasoned

boards, making the whole house jar and vibrate. It was like the clashing of cymbals, and Lorraine caught her breath and listened between the strokes, but there was no faint echo-like tapping from upstairs. Her grandmother did not always take notice of the difference between night and day; the kitchen was the length of the house from her room, and the sound of an axe was nothing to cause alarm by daylight. Lorraine caught up her burdens and ran toward the kitchen. To be fighting this real danger without her grandmother's knowledge was an exhilaration which bore half the weight of the swinging, dripping pails.

It took but a few blows to make room for the man to put his head and shoulders into the loft. The smoke came down around them in great clouds, as if he himself were upon fire. Lorraine stood looking up at him, her hands locked together, waiting for his command. And then by some sense more subtle than hearing she was aware of another motion in the house, and, turning, she saw old Abby run past the doorway, her white hair hanging on her shoulders, her nightgown fluttering, and all her features wild. Even at that distance she was running with her hands outstretched, ready to ring the bell.

"Not yet, not yet!" Lorraine cried, rushing after her. She caught the old woman by her thin, bent shoulders and held her still. Abby stared at her for a moment, struggled against her hands, and then burst into tears.

Lorraine's clasp relaxed to gentleness. "Don't be afraid," she said. "I shall ring the bell if it is necessary. There is a man here who knows, and we are taking every care. Go back and get on something warm, but don't go into grandmother's room. Listen if you hear her knocking and let me know."

Abby stood a moment more, looking from the girl's face to the dancing light upon the trees. At last she put her hand up to wipe away a few of her swift-flowing tears, and, still sobbing, turned back toward the stairs. Lorraine went into the kitchen with a tremulous loathing of her own strength. Poor Abby was so frail a thing to conquer that she herself turned weak from head to foot.

The man had come down the ladder and was carrying water up. "Bring more," he said to her. "You and I can manage this if we work fast. There is a defect, and the heat has set the boards to smoking too, but the fire is passing farther up the chimney now. It will soon be done."

She began to carry the heavy pails up the

ladder, and the refrain to which she had filled them came back into her ears, measuring off the steps. The smoke billowed out around her so that it did not seem as if they were making way against it, but she did not ask and the stranger did not say. She was content to carry the water faster and faster up the hard rounds of the ladder, and to hear it hiss upon the hot bricks and the boards, and to catch a breath now and then of the steam which mingled with the smoke. Without knowing it she was near to fainting, and sometimes she could not have climbed the ladder again if she had not been saying to herself, "It is not time yet to ring the bell."

"That will do," the man said, coming down. His face was wet and blackened, but he was smiling. "We've done it by ourselves," he went on, "and the danger is past, and we can go into the air."

Lorraine followed him unsteadily. "Are you quite sure that the danger is past?" she said.

The night lay dim around them out-of-doors, and yet he stepped from the porch and looked up at the chimney before he answered her.

"Quite sure," he said, coming back, "and now I shall put things to rights a little for you before I go away."

"Oh, no," she said, "I can have all that done in the morning. Do you have far to go?"

"Twenty miles," the stranger said.

Lorraine's heart gave an unexpected throb. "What is your name?" she asked.

"Roger Foxhall," he said; "and if this is the old Walden place, as I suppose, we must be distant cousins. My grandfather used to tell me of the Waldens when I was a boy. It seems his father married one of them against her father's will, and there was a breach between them after that. And then of course I have heard of the old Mrs. Walden who has lived so long."

"She is upstairs telling of how the joy bells rang for your great-grandfather's wedding," Lorraine broke in with a trembling voice. "Oh, it is all so strange. It was she who took his part."

Roger Foxhall smiled gravely. "I thank her then," he said.

Lorraine held out her hand to him. "And I thank you. I cannot ever tell you how much I thank you, not only for the help about the fire" — she paused, wishing she could tell him how the past had seemed to hold her with its suffocating hands before he came. But the sight of her face and the few words she had said were enough to make him

partly understand. A great pity rose in him as he thought of leaving her alone there in the dark with the old, old days.

"Do not thank me," he said; "let me come again."

"Oh, come!" Lorraine said, "for my friends have all forgotten I am here."

"I will not forget," he answered, "but until I come, good-by."

She lingered until the sound of his galloping horse had faded into the beating of her heart. Then she went upstairs.

Old Abby was crouching with her face buried on her bed. Lorraine stooped to kiss her. "The fire is all out and I am going in to grandmother," she said. "Has grandmother called you?"

Abby lifted her white head slowly. "Not as I have heard," she said; but Lorraine had gone.

Grandmother Walden was lying waxen white upon her bed, and she looked up and called Lorraine by a name that was not hers.

"Sibyl," she said, "I've been thinking of the day the bells rang for Roger Foxhall's wedding. Do you remember? Every one called them the bells of joy."

"I remember, mother," the girl said simply, and stole back down the stairs. Everything had passed without her grand-

mother's knowledge, and she was still among the memories, needing no other care. The darkness fell like a curtain behind Lorraine as she closed the door on all the past.

"Roger Foxhall," she murmured as she looked up at the stars which glimmered above the black massing of the trees. Her hand stole up and found the bell-rope swaying softly, but the bell hung silent above her, wreathed in tangled vine, and she wondered if she had been guarding it through all the years to be a bell of joy.

A tremor passed through the swathing of leaves and tendrils, and the great bell answered with a sweet, half-wakened tone.

THE HILDRETHS' WEDDING-DAY

A GIRL came from the bayou along a little trail which passed through the marsh, on bits of silvery cypress-drift, and through the woods where brown pine-needles carpeted it, up to the Hildreth garden. The crape-myrtles stood stiff as sentinels beside the gate, but the walk led up between its borders in confident welcome to a blank open space, all gray and powdery, as if it had never seen the sunlight or felt moisture. The girl stood breathless, gazing at it. The last of the spring roses scattered their petals lavishly around the beds, and added their fragrance to the sweetness of the Cape jasmine and the tiny fluffy balls of the acacias, but the Hildreth house was gone. The hollyhocks and the high shrubs seemed to be lifting themselves on tiptoe to look down at the scar where it had been. The breeze sighed a little through the great live-oak which had spent years in spreading wide and generous to shade the whole south gallery, and the mocking-birds flitted in and out of its branches with that swift spreading of their

wings for flight which makes the white bars in them always a revelation. After she had seen these things with widening eyes, the girl's hand went up to her throat, and she gave a little sob.

"Is everything to change?" she asked half brokenly. Something in her mood stood between her and natural surprise. She felt as if she had been prepared to find the place like this, but the tears rose in her eyes as she looked, for each familiar beauty of it was something bereaved. She opened the gate and walked between the rose bushes toward the spot where the house had been, but when she reached it she turned away. She threaded all the bowery paths, and each seemed to hold something which she must turn away from, too; but when she stood by the acacia tree she put out her hand and touched it timidly. Soon, as it did not forbid her, she lifted her hand, drew down a branch, and picked just one of the tiny yellow tufts which breathe all the sweetness of the sweetest days of love, held it against her cheek for a moment, and then, with trembling fingers, hid it in the dark braids of her hair.

A faint "yo-heave-o," like that of sailors hauling up an anchor, was wafted through the garden, and the girl raised her face and looked about her desolately. Far down

Live-oak lane, between the rounded trees, she saw the Hildreth house. It seemed to have picked up its doorsteps and started out across the village; there was an excited gleam in its windows, and the sunlight, falling more freely on its roof than it had ever done in the garden, gave it the look of some tenderly shielded old person that has stolen bareheaded away from loving children, who do not remember that age has its restlessness.

The girl could notice now that a way had been cleared for the house to travel backward out of the garden, leaving the flowers courteously, as if they were a royal presence; and she followed in its path through the opened panel of fence and on into the lane, where the blue shimmer of the Gulf ended the vistas of light on either side of the house. She walked eagerly, and her face had dimpled into smiles, yet even as she smiled she put her hand up to her hair, and the depths of her eyes still kept their sorrow. "I don't see how Mrs. Hildreth could leave her flowers," she said once, with a sigh.

A band of creole workmen were prying the house along on its clumsy rollers, and shouting and singing resonantly at each slow forward lurch. Their voices had the sweetness of a summer land and knowledge of the sea, and they worked at leisure and grace-

fully, their red or blue shirts shining out against the greenery which still clung to the Hildreth house, for it had not laid aside its vines, but was carrying their roots daintily clear of the ground in baskets, just as another dear old fugitive might lift her skirts.

A woman with rosy cheeks and smooth brown hair was sitting by the window, and as the girl approached she reached down to help her take the long step from the road to door-sill. "Connie Bainbridge," she said, "I don't know of any one I would rather have come walking in like this to act as bridesmaid on my wedding-day," and she drew her visitor into a room that was startlingly unchanged except for the glory of flowers with which the garden had said good-by. It was hard to remember that in the garden they had not been missed at all.

The girl sank into a chair and looked about her wearily. A long string of gull's eggs, creamy and softly flecked, hung near her on the wall. She took hold of them as she so often had before, and passed them through her fingers like a rosary. "Your wedding-day?" she said.

"Anniversary, of course, I mean," Mrs. Hildreth answered, looking out through a window that gave a glimpse of the beckoning sea. She smiled musingly as she looked.

There was always something of generous content about her, as if life grew sweeter and broader with the afternoon sun; and Connie Bainbridge remembered that when the house had stood in its garden she herself had never lifted the gate-latch and walked in between the roses without leaving every care behind. But now her heart had learned a different way. She took down the great rosary so that she might bend her head over it. "What *is* happening?" she asked.

Mrs. Hildreth looked at her, noticing the tone. "You see, we always celebrate each wedding-day," she said. "When we come to the rounded numbers, we invite people, and do as they expect us to; but on the other years, that most people forget, we do just what we please — Robbie and I. Robbie has just gone over to the village, but he'll soon be home. This is our twenty-ninth wedding-day, and we're moving to the sea. You know, when we were first married we wanted a building site on the beach, and we couldn't afford it. Now we can, and so we're celebrating." She paused, looking curiously at Connie's face, which was turned away from her. When she went on there was a soft laugh in her voice. "We couldn't move without our house, of course; it's too much a part of us — and, anyway, when we die our

shell may feel more at home if it's left on the beach."

The girl tried to join in Mrs. Hildreth's laugh, but when she parted her lips, a low, passionate sob came through them. She fell on her knees and bowed her head in Mrs. Hildreth's lap. Her words came in a gasp. "This was to have been my wedding-day," she said.

Mrs. Hildreth put her arms about her, murmuring, "My child!"

"Yes," the girl answered, in a hard, dry voice. "We decided to have no one but mamma and papa with us, and then to announce it and take you all by surprise — now we shall surprise you in another way, for it will never be at all." She was trembling, and she caught Mrs. Hildreth's dress in her hands. "It was my fault, of course," she finished; "at least you will all think it was my fault."

The joy of her long, happy years shone before Mrs. Hildreth's eyes until they blurred. She lifted the girl's face between her hands. "Connie Bainbridge," she said gently, "you and Jack Houghton are not commonplace, foolish children who quarrel for no cause. Tell me all about your trouble, from beginning to end."

"I couldn't bear explaining it to mamma,"

Connie Bainbridge said, "and I meant to say nothing to any one, but when you spoke like that of your wedding-day" — her voice broke into the tone of one whose heart yields itself to sympathy or love. "Ah, I can tell everything to you," she cried, "for no one else on earth would know so well what I have thrown away."

Along the street which led from the centre of the village to the old Hildreth place the great trees interlaced their restful shadows, letting only the smallest flecks of sunlight sift between them in the perfect silence of the idle summer afternoon. It was strange that the very shadows did not stir and change a little when a sharp thudding of hoofs and the swing of a horse broke through the air, and a young man came riding at a gallop beneath the trees. He held his head high, and his lips were compressed in a way that had nothing to do with the swift, easy motion of the horse, and there was a frown above his eyes, which were looking straight ahead with a sort of bitter challenge in them for all they saw or did not see. He drew rein abruptly at the Hildreth gate. The crape-myrtles were waiting for him as usual, and the sweet odors of the garden spread out to summon him, but the straight path led to vacancy.

He gazed for a few moments at the deso-

late square of gray sand, with the sympathetic flowers elbowing one another around it. His thought told him very simply what had happened to the house, but his heart felt only the symbolism of the place. He dropped moodily to the ground, tied his horse, and went in through the gate. From the back of the garden he looked down Live-oak lane and saw the house, while the shouts of the workmen came to him like a faint farewell upon the breeze. They interested him very little. He went to the open space of sand and lashed at it morosely with his riding-whip. "Is nobody in the world satisfied?" he wondered, lifting a savage whirl of dust into the air.

"They'll be uprooting the roses next and carrying them after the house," he went on, turning his whip against a tall bush which he loved, and sending a shower of pink petals to the ground. He tramped across them ruthlessly, bowed his head under an arbor of honeysuckle, and whistled a note or two as he walked along the paths. "I'll be glad when the whole thing is torn up," he declared; "it would be useless to try coming back here any more." He started to whistle again, but broke off. "Perhaps," he muttered harshly, "you think you can stand seeing the Hildreths, when the garden is too

much for you!" He stood quite still, and set his face against the inroads of a change which left nothing in his life untouched. The knowledge of all that had gone from him seemed to rise like a tide about him, until his physical balance was unsteadied by it, and he leaned against a tree and shut his eyes. In that moment of relaxation his senses were no longer guarded by anger, and he felt the soft, perfumed air stealing over him in a caress. There were many sweet odors in it, but one of them was more like a personal message than the others. He smiled faintly, and opened his eyes. It was the little acacia tree he was leaning against. He reached up for one of the yellow balls, and as he felt it between his fingers a memory of joy came into his face. The little thing was like love itself, it was so laden with sweetness. He kissed it more than once, and then, putting it in his pocket with a tender deference, he turned back along the path, and followed where the house was leading toward the sunlit vista of the Gulf.

Robbie Hildreth had returned from the village and was working among the creoles, but he hurried forward as the young fellow came up. Hildreth was an elderly man whom time and the sun had touched so often and so lovingly that they had blended all the

colors of his hair and face into a tone of silver gray, out of which his blue eyes glanced humorously as he shook the young fellow's hand. "Betty and I are having a wedding march, for the twenty-ninth time," he said "and Betty is guarding all her treasures in the house. We're going to have a wedding supper when we get to the beach, and you must stay."

"I'd forgotten that this was your wedding-day," the young man said.

"Why, whose else should it be?" asked Hildreth, laughing. "Yours?"

The young fellow looked at him a moment. He knew that behind Robbie Hildreth's merry eyes there was one of the gentlest, truest souls. He drew him a little farther from the workmen. "It was to have been my wedding-day," he said.

Many people who knew that the Hildreth house was moving went out of their way to see the place where it had stood. Among them was the young minister who was taking his first charge in the village. Robbie Hildreth and he had met at the post-office, and Hildreth had told him that the moving was a celebration, so he started presently to call on Mrs. Hildreth, and to wish her constant joy and as many returns of the day in the future as there had been in the past. "That would

take them far beyond their golden wedding," he thought, and, with a sudden realization of the faithfulness of a love which had lasted so long and would last so much longer if Heaven spared them, he turned his steps to pass the garden where they had lived together for so many years.

Even young ministers feel a rise and fall of the divine spirit within them, and as this young man stood by the Hildreth gate and looked at the loneliness that was left when all the flowers clustered about an empty spot of sand, a fresh understanding of the sacredness of kindly living came to him and filled him with inspired humility. There seemed so many warm, sweet, simple truths to tell the world, although he felt himself almost too young and far too wisdomless to speak. "Twenty-nine years," he thought, "of one of the most actual tests of grace—and I have not even reached the point where they began. I love no one woman better than another, — perhaps I should thank God for it, — and I've never even performed a marriage ceremony in my life."

He looked about him from the site of the house to all the things which the Hildreths had been cherishing so long. "I don't see how they can bear to leave their flowers," he said, with a little sigh; "but then, as long as

they take their love with them, more flowers will grow." It seemed to the young minister just then that grace might be less varying if he felt more of individual love; but soon he turned from the gate and walked 'round outside the garden and down into Live-oak lane, following the house. He was still a very young man, and pretty little speeches went from him sometimes, and so as he walked he kept repeating, "I wish you constant joy, and as many returns of the day in the future as there have been in the past."

He neared the house and noticed how daintily it had raised its vines to move, and he was wondering if it would be just the thing for him to tell Mrs. Hildreth how much it looked like her when she came to church on wet or dusty mornings; but before he could decide he saw that Mr. Hildreth was standing several rods nearer to him than to the house, and talking very earnestly, with his hand on tall Jack Houghton's shoulder. The minister paused, for they looked as if they were speaking in confidence, and he wished neither to go forward and interrupt them nor to retreat. Just as he paused, Mrs. Hildreth stepped down from the house, followed by Connie Bainbridge. The minister felt that it was awkward to be standing there in indecision, and he blushed. No one saw

him, however, for Mrs. Hildreth and Connie Bainbridge both stopped with a startled look at sight of the two men who were talking together. There were traces of tears about Mrs. Hildreth's eyes, and Connie's face was white. They stood still for a moment, and then Connie shrank back toward the door, but Mrs. Hildreth took her hand. The girl's expression changed and lighted. She went forward swiftly and touched young Houghton on the arm. The minister turned away when Houghton, taken by surprise, and bending to her, spoke her name.

Mrs. Hildreth and Robbie moved away from them and toward the minister, who stepped to meet them, smiling and fumbling with his thoughts, for the words he meant to say were gone. It happened that he did not need them, for Mrs. Hildreth turned back and took the other young people in the house. Robbie Hildreth's smile was merrier than ever in his eyes. "Do you know the marriage service?" he asked.

"Why — why, of course," stammered the minister, "but I've never" —

"Then it's time you began," said Robbie Hildreth, and he felt that the minister was trembling as he took him by the arm and drew him toward the door. "It's not a dangerous thing, you know," he added, reas-

suringly. "I can testify after twenty-nine years."

The young minister flushed warmly, but his arm grew steadier. "You have shown what a beautiful thing it can be," he said. And yet he hesitated in the doorway, for Mrs. Hildreth was at the window telling the men outside that they might let the house stand still a little while; so the two young people were standing alone together hand in hand. He could see their faces, and he felt very sure that it would be an intrusion if he went forward to speak to them. But Robbie Hildreth was behind him pushing him gently, and Mrs. Hildreth had turned from the window. A great stillness fell like invocation, and, gathering his courage, he went toward them, and his heart stirred nervously as he rehearsed the marriage service in his mind.

Afterward, while the house was moving leisurely along its way, the minister stepped down from it, and wandered back to the deserted garden. He stopped a second time beside the gate. The roses that spring had forgotten mingled their sweetness with the rich, dreamy fragrance of the Cape jasmines and the fluffy yellow acacias—the flowers of love. The big live-oak which had sheltered so much happiness seemed still reach-

ing out to cover the blank space where the dust drifted.

"I wished them constant joy," he murmured, and the color mounted softly to his cheek, for they had wished him something, too. Their joyous faces rose against the isolation where he stood. A few small, common blossoms looked up in his eyes. There are many names for them. They are often spoken of in jest, yet there are men who count them flowers of triumph — others, flowers of unrest.

"Bachelor's-buttons," he whispered, smiling at them; "the flowers of loneliness — but I should not be saying that," and he knelt quickly then to gather one, and as he knelt he breathed a little penitential prayer.

"*In hoc signo vinces*," he added when he rose. He glanced apprehensively out toward the road, and, slipping the flower into his buttonhole, walked slowly home.

THE FIG-TREES OF OLD JOURDÉ

WINDING inland, Bayou Marie opens a sunlit vista between dark live-oaks and pine-trees. It passes the deserted Old House Point and Tiblier's gloomy place, where brown nets are always in sight, stretched on the long pier to dry in the sunshine.

It passes Antoine Manuel's quaint old house and his tiny shipyard. Manuel's green knoll commands the curving stream in all directions, and among his boats at anchor drift the fallen blooms of pink azaleas. They begin to grow just beyond the orange grove of Antoine *fi*ls, so called to distinguish him from his father, the shipbuilder. The young man's wife is Madame Antoine *fi*ls, and his mother is simply Madame Antoine; for farther up the bayou Madame Manuel, the grandmother, lives in widowed solitude.

Past all these warm-hearted, simple-minded creole folk the Marie lures on, through warm, bright silence and the spicy scent of myrtle and bay-trees in the woods. Too shallow for schooner traffic, and too narrow, sometimes, even for a skiff to turn in, it ripples between

dun marshes or flowery, vine-draped banks where the air is sweet with grape-blossom and the golden bells of jasmine.

Green trout dart through clear, shimmering reaches from one pool of shadow to another, and sometimes the call of a bird breaks through a quiet that is more full of gladness and life than the atmosphere of deeper channelled, more frequented streams.

There, in the bright sunlight and the utter loneliness, the fishermen who paddle up the bayou in their pirogues, casting for green trout, know of a rude shanty, built creole fashion, with the beaten earth for a floor, and a low-pitched roof running out beyond the walls to shelter a gallery in front. With its ever-fresh whitewash and paint it looks new still, but it stands in the shadow of gnarled, wide-spreading fig-trees that tell a story of the many years since old Jourdé came to build and to plant in seclusion, beyond even old Madame Manuel's place.

He is well liked, this Jourdé, although he is no talker, and prefers spending his days alone at his little hermitage, rather than among his neighbors; and the creoles, who have no taste for prying, leave him to himself, content with their own simple conclusions.

"De ole Jourdé ees a good man, bud 'e ees not sociab'," Manuel will explain, as he

fills the pipe of good-fellowship, " 'e ees not sociab'."

One summer day when the shadows had stolen half across the narrow Marie — it had been a very good day for fish — a white-faced stranger left his pirogue at Jourdé's little landing and walked quickly up the path that old Jourdé had worn to his house under the fig-trees. The stranger knocked at the open door; waited, and knocked again; looked in, and then came away with a groan to seat himself on a weather-worn bench beneath one of the trees. He held one hand in the other, and turned a pain-drawn face to watch for some moving figure on the merry, deserted bayou.

It was Jourdé's favorite fig-tree under which his visitor sat waiting — a fantastic old tree which had been blown over once in a storm, so that its trunk stretched horizontally above the ground, supported by part of its roots and part of its branches. Good Jourdé, who loved an experiment almost better than a tree, had heaped earth upon the tips of these branches, so that they had taken root and grown, giving the old tree three or four new trunks, on which it flourished like a banyan, though half of its original roots still stretched upward, dry and useless, while its branches sought the sunlight at every angle impossible to the nature of fig-trees.

At last a boat came in sight on the bayou. Old Jourdé was returning.

Little as Jourdé went abroad, he was known at sight anywhere on Bayou Marie, Pontomoc Bay, or Bayou Porto, up which he went once a week to the village of Pontomoc after his mail. Old Jourdé neither paddled like the men in pirogues, nor rowed like the ordinary men in skiffs. Wherever he went, he stood half upright, facing the bow of his short, broad boat, that seemed to be modelled after Jourdé himself, and, with his two oars held securely in the tholes, pushed on them instead of pulling, surveying his way carefully in advance. Jourdé had made a mistake early in life — since then he had preferred to see his way.

The stranger's heart sank at sight of the person that walked up from the landing. A quaint, squat figure was old Jourdé, like a sturdy toadstool under his great broad hat. His bare feet paddled firmly along the hard path as if they had no thought or longing for shoes; his faded trousers were turned up over well-bronzed shins; and outside of the trousers hung his red flannel shirt, in the free, cool fashion of the poorer creoles on the coast.

But when Jourdé came nearer, looking with surprise at his visitor, there was something reassuring in his pudgy, sunburned face,

though, from under his lightly pencilled brows, his eyes looked strangely, half wanderingly. They had seen that early mistake.

"Dr. Jourdé?"

The barefooted man bowed and lifted his hat with a politeness somewhat less graceful and more ornate than the ordinary courtliness to be found among the primitive fishermen.

"My name ees Jourdé," he said. If he had been speaking to a creole, his measured accents would have been in perfect French. As it was, his English was the most correct at his command. His neighbors spoke to him in their easy creole patois, almost as provincial as their English; but although for comfort and economy he conformed to the common costume, there was a clinging punctiliousness about him that showed in his avoidance of the common speech.

"But you are a doctor?" continued the stranger, on whose face Jourdé's eye had at once read physical suffering. "At least the women in the house down below here told me you understood medicine and had instruments, and I want you" —

"Did zey not tell, also, zat my knife and my medicine zey are all for ze dumb animals?" Jourdé interrupted gravely.

"What do I care for that, man?" the stranger retorted nervously. "Look here,

it's only a little thing. I've caught this fish-hook in my thumb and I can't get it out. You can do it well enough; it don't require any skill if you have a sharp knife, but it hurts unbearably; I can't paddle back to the village with it, and the men in the houses below here are all off shrimping. I could do it myself if it was my left thumb" — The man spoke almost savagely, for Jourdé's face was still impassive. "I tell you, no skill is needed."

Jourdé smiled oddly. "Eet geeves me much pain to see you so suffering," he said. "Then attend. I cannot undertake your oper-acion, but I weell fasten your boat behin' that of me, and weell take you to ze village" —

"Do you think I'll stand this while you tow me three miles? Where's your knife? You've dilly-dallied enough; I can hack it out with my left hand."

Jourdé stood silent a moment; then he said, "Eet ees not so easy a work, zis 'acking out; but as you say, eet ees a small sing. Sit zere one moment, I weel get my eenstru-ment and rhemove ze 'ook."

The reluctant practitioner opened the only closed door in his cabin, and went into a little room, shelved from floor to ceiling, and crowded with books, magazines, pamphlets,

and jars of many sorts and sizes. There was one window, and by it a table, on which stood a simple apparatus, suggestive of chemistry, and a highly-finished wooden case. Jourdé walked straight to the case and opened it. There was a little nick in the cover. He drew back, steadying himself by the table. His eyes saw something that did not belong to the little cabin on the Marie. It is an operating-table in a city hospital. The room is small and old-fashioned; the students crowd each other eagerly, watching Jourdé's skilful hands. The struggling of the patient makes it almost impossible to work, and the moment is critical. The assistant has already demurred at using more chloroform, but Jourdé orders it. In an instant the assistant tells him it is too much. He drops his instruments; the assistant removes the chloroform mask. They lower the head of the table, and fight desperately with every help to resuscitation. Some student picks up an instrument and nervously hacks, hacks, hacks, upon the case. The assistant glances from the patient's sunken, pulseless temple to Jourdé, fiercely applying his restoratives. The faces of the crowding students are tense. Jourdé looks up, meeting the assistant's eyes. They both stand erect. Some one whispers:

“ My God ! ”

Jourdé hears his own calm words. "This possibility is always to be faced. In a case like this, when he has to choose between evils, the operator is" —

A regardless voice murmurs, "Between devil and deep sea," but the set faces of the other students do not relax. Jourdé has a few more words for them. They disperse quietly.

"I can't stand this. I tell you, if you're afraid give me the knife." The stranger was at the laboratory door.

"Een one meenute, monsieur," Jourdé answered, starting slightly. "I am wiz you immediately. But you mus' pr-repare; much pain ees possib'."

"Not much more than I have already, I reckon," the stranger replied. But Jourdé shook his head as he selected one of the glistening knives. Through all these years, while his old associates had been wondering about him, missing him, and finally forgetting him, Jourdé had been guarding his instruments from the approach of rust and tarnish. They were ready for any sick or injured brute, but a human patient he had never touched.

Jourdé's lips showed white in the ruddy sunburn of his face as he came into the glowing outer world; but the wounded hand was

grasped firmly and there was no trembling of the sharp knife as it began its work. The stranger watched him disdainfully at first, with an assumption of bearing the operation carelessly. But as pain grew into keen torture and the surgeon's face became intent and eager over his task, the patient saw that his contempt had been unjust; and it took all the remembrance of it to close his lips and hold his arm unshrinking. At last, in an excruciating moment, he gave his hand a jerk, only to feel the pitiless clasp tighten on it.

"I don't believe I can stand it, doctor," he protested. "Don't you have something here that would stop the pain?"

Jourdé smiled slightly over his knife.

"I've got to have something!" the man insisted sharply.

"Patience!" cried Jourdé. "Ze dumb beast show more reason. Pardon, I do know ze pain, but it will soon be done."

A few moments later Jourdé was carefully bandaging the thumb. Now that the suffering and the strain were ended, each man felt that he owed the other some amends. Jourdé's mind was on some Scuppernong wine in the cabin; he went after it presently. The stranger fell to praising the great fig-trees that shadowed them.

"They thrive so finely here, I should think you would plant an orchard," he suggested.

Old Jourdé shrugged his square shoulders.

"Eet 'as been tried," he said.

"Isn't there any market?"

"Ze canning factory, yes."

"Then why don't you plant them?"

"Monsieur," said Jourdé, "zere are some str-range sings. One ees about ze feeg-trees."

"I don't understand," said the stranger.

"No, I do not understand eet myself, but people notice eet. Ze feeg-tree grow bes' — well — near w'ere somebody live. And w'y? I do not know. Ze creole people say zay mus' feel ze breas of zeir master each morning, — but zat ees not true, eet cannot be."

"Must feel their master's breath!" echoed the stranger. "What difference can that make, if they receive the same care somewhere else?"

"Oh, eet is only supersteection. Eet cannot be true. I am creole, too, but I know zat cannot be true; eet is too unreasonabl'. Yet zay do grow bes' near ze 'ouse; zere mus' be ozer cause."

"I should say so," agreed the more fervent sceptic, rising to take his leave. "Can't grow without feeling their master's breath! Why don't you ask how it would be if the

trees had a bad master — wouldn't his breath wither them?"

"Yes, I have t'ought of zat. I know not w'at ze supersteecion ees."

The two men shook hands and parted.

Jourdé did not know, but he had often thought about it, and it comforted him that his trees had always flourished.

Jourdé was absorbed in the little laboratory where he spent almost all his time of late, when Antoine *fi*ls dropped in. It was not often that his neighbors dropped in on Jourdé, so that a call generally meant the indisposition of neighboring live-stock, or some important village news. But Antoine *fi*ls had a sorrowful tale to tell.

"A very pleasant day, Monsieur Antoine," said Jourdé, with his studied courtesy.

"Eet is a little warm," replied Antoine, wiping his bronzed forehead, "a little warm on de bayou. I have been to my gran'moder, below here, and I say to myself, I say, — we will go on to see Monsieur Jourdé an' see w'at he think about Tiblier."

"Let me give you a little refreshment," said Jourdé, already on his way to the cupboard. "A glass of my good Scuppernong; it has been ripening since '79. There is no better made on all the coast. But what is it about Tiblier?"

"You have not hear de news 'bout Tiblier, François Tiblier, dat is near dead down at de Point?"

"Near dead!" exclaimed Jourdé, stopping with his wine near the middle of the room. "But I saw him only—when was it? Not long ago. What is the matter?"

"Fever — *fièvre typhoïde*, de Docteur Weellis say. He come from de village every day to see François. He give Madame François ver' little hope."

Old Jourdé filled two wine-glasses in silence; then, presenting one to Antoine: "Your good health, monsieur, and the recovery of our friend Tiblier!"

"And your prosperity, Monsieur Jourdé," added Antoine. "Ah, monsieur, dis wine is excellen'."

Jourdé acknowledged the praise absent-mindedly.

"How long has the fever been running?" he questioned abruptly.

Antoine lowered his glass. "Pret' near on t'ree week now, I reckon. It come on him soon after he come from shrimp-fishin'. It is not so healt'y where he live, down at de Point; I tole my fader dat it is not healt'y at de Tiblier place, but he say de Tiblier family has been well as any of us. He t'ink dat Docteur Weellis ain't givin' François de right treatmen'."

"Hey?" cried Jourdé eagerly. "How is Dr. Willis treating him?"

"Well, if it is like w'at dey all say, I doan' t'ink, me, dat de docteur is treatin' François at all. He says to Madame François, he say, 'Give him nosing to eat;' at least, dat is all I can hear dat he do for him; an' my fader, he say dat Docteur Weellis is starving François to deat'—dat w'at he say. De docteur say dat de fever, w'en it doan' get no nourishmen', goin' wear itself out, but my fader has seen François,—he wen' to see him las' evenin',—and w'at he say is dat de fever is nourishin' itself on François, an' it is François dat will wear out de firs'. Oh, it is hard not to mek mistek in dose fever!"

It was hard not to make mistakes. But the thought of young Tiblier, overcome by exposure and scantier fare than that usual to creole frugality, pitted against the relentless malarial fever,—Jourdé could have shaken Willis with one vigorous, plump arm. He had great forbearance with youth, had Jourdé, but not with youth that clung to theories which he himself had abandoned twenty years ago. He knew François—a brave lad; it was a pity that the inexperienced, fogyish Willis must learn at his expense. Ah, well, it was a great pity;

François had a little family to leave. Jourdé roused himself. Too true a physician at heart openly to criticise a confrère, he still dared give Antoine little hope.

"I am sure that Dr. Willis will do everything he can," he said earnestly. "He is conscientious, there is no doubt; he will do the best he knows."

"Yes, he say dat himself," replied Antoine doubtfully, as he rose to take his leave, "an' me, too, I t'ink dat he means well. But it is little matter w'at you mean if you are making mistek. Madame François, she is sure dat de docteur is right; she is satisfy, dat is one good t'ing. But I wish, me, dat we had some oder docteur at Pontomoc."

Jourdé accompanied Antoine *fils* to the landing, where they lingered a little to discuss the best treatment for certain ailing poultry, and kindred items; for Jourdé's neighbors had learned to depend on his advice and surgical skill. But when the flash of Antoine's noiseless paddle had disappeared down the bayou, Jourdé hastened back to his little laboratory and buried himself in his books.

He did a great deal of thinking as the days went on, and read his medical journals more closely than ever. They were the only links he allowed himself with the profession

he loved. Through them he followed all the discoveries, all the new lines of treatment that he could never test, espousing this theory, condemning that, with all the passionate vehemence in which a disabled veteran, watching the battle, exults or fumes at the movements of those in command.

The news of François grew more discouraging to all his friends, and it did not surprise Jourdé to learn, about ten days later, that young Tiblier had succumbed.

"He should have had nourishment," murmured Jourdé, in the laboratory on his return from François's funeral. "A diet of milk, sponging. He could have been saved, yes, he could have been saved."

Old Jourdé's changed habits began to make their impression. The rich sunburn faded from his good, chubby face, and he almost forgot his garden, with its grape-vines and its fig-trees. True, he still sat out on the old bench to smoke his twilight pipe, but his mind was back with his old comrades in the old New Orleans haunts.

It was while he was sitting there one evening, letting his pipe die out in his hand, that Antoine *fils* came running up to him in breathless haste.

"You mus' come," he panted, forgetting even to bear his head. "My moder is ver'

sick. I come here, for dere is no time to go for de docteur. Come!"

Jourdé sprang to his feet. "What is it?" he asked.

"Oh, I doan' know," cried Antoine, wringing his hands. "My fader is wid her, an' they sen' me here. She is ver' sick — de chill, Adèle, my wife, say; she try to make her warm. Her hands are all blue, an' her face look — oh, her face it look like dead! Come, monsieur, come quick!"

But Jourdé had sat down again. Antoine did not notice that his voice was dry and hoarse.

"Go for your doctor," he heard Jourdé say. "Go at once, you may not be too late. I — I cannot come. I am out of practice."

"You will not come," gasped Antoine, scarcely comprehending what Jourdé said. "Not come — *O mon Dieu!*"

"Go!" cried Jourdé fiercely. "Hurry, man, do you hear! The tide will be with you to the village. You will be in time."

"Me an' my fader doan' like de way he tek care of François," Antoine objected, still hesitating. "We t'ink" —

"Go!" shouted Jourdé, stamping his foot. "Be quick, if you don't want to be late! Go!" and Antoine, overawed, obeyed.

"He'll be cramming ice down her throat!"

I know him," thought Jourdé bitterly, when Antoine was gone. "Crushed ice, the idiot, with the chill already on! Bathing her in alcohol" — he shuddered. "Thank Heaven, he'll probably be too late. Poor Antoine, he takes it very hard — poor boy!" Jourdé jumped up and went into his laboratory.

Did he forget that he was "out of practice"? Then why did he repeat, "It would be murder — another murder; this is duty — a duty from God himself," as if he felt the need of reassurance, all the way to Madame Manuel's bedside? For Jourdé's pipe lay forgotten on the bench under the fig-tree that night, pearled with the heavy summer dew. Jourdé was at Manuel's, fighting with hot drinks and stimulants against a congestive chill. When Antoine *fils* returned with Dr. Willis, Jourdé had been before him two good hours.

A new sign appeared in the village, bearing the legend, "Hippolyte Jourdé, M.D., Physician and Surgeon." It caused a great stir among the townspeople, coming as it did a few days after the news of Madame Manuel's recovery. This cure was considered little less than miraculous by a community accustomed to seeing disease baffle such medical skill as could afford to bury itself so

far from the centres of science. From the day that he opened his office, Dr. Jourdé's hands were full.

And Jourdé was happy. The curious expression of self-distrust had vanished from his eyes, and in its stead there shone a burning eagerness, as if he would make up in a day all that he had lost during his self-imposed exile. His dress, too, was transformed, and the only garment which this trim doctor inherited from "old Jourdé" was the broad-brimmed hat.

Stories of his former achievements began to be known, and many guesses were made at the mystery of his long retirement, but as they never came from any one who knew, they bore little truth and less authenticity.

Toward the end of August, the principal hotel-keeper of Pontomoc set a large force of men at work to strengthen the breakwater in anticipation of the annual storm. The heat was intense, and the work lagged until a rising tide frightened the men and they fell to for the best that was in them. The hotel stood quite on the Gulf, and was protected from wash of the tide only by its breakwater.

It came to be a dangerous occupation, this strengthening the breakwater; for the first row of loosened piles gave and crunched against the second with every wave. It had

been the intention of the hotel manager to drive an outer row of posts, but this was scarcely begun when the men were forced to give up and hastily lash the rest together with chains. It was in this task that Emil Georget almost lost his life. Between the waves, he had been working among the others with ropes and chains and spars, but there came one wave for which Emil was not prepared. The rest of the men sprang away; he stood, suddenly caught by the arm, between the straining piles. It was only for a moment; the wave fell back and left him freed, stretched out on the beach as he had fallen, but his arm was a hopeless mass.

There was an immediate summons for Dr. Jourdé, but he was out, and Dr. Willis was taken down to the sufferer at once.

"I have no instruments for this," he said, when he saw the condition of Georget's arm. "We will have to wait for Dr. Jourdé, but I can make him comfortable until then."

Emil had been laid on the side gallery of the hotel, and young Willis was bending over him as Jourdé came up carrying his instruments.

"He suffered so that I've just given him morphine," Willis explained nervously.

"You eenjected eet?"

"In the arm."

Jourdé's eyes nailed the younger man.

"Ze eenjured arm?" he asked sharply.

"Of course, where it was need" —
Something in Jourdé's face closed the sentence.

Emil's voice rose entreatingly. Jourdé went over to him and made a careful examination, in spite of the sufferer's protests that he wanted to be put out of his misery.

"'E promise 'e will help me," Emil groaned, seeking out Willis with his eyes, "but de t'ings 'e do doan' do no good — oh, I can't stan' dis, me, — I can', I can'."

"Be brave, man," Jourdé cried peremptorily, in French. "Have courage. Nothing can help you unless you first help yourself. Make up your mind to go through this without anything. You see that the things don't help you. Come, man, be brave!"

There was something magnetic in this quaint, plump doctor when he roused himself. Emil said: "Monsieur know bes'."

But Jourdé felt like a craven. He knew that "the things," if properly applied, would bring relief; and he made his simple preparations in the haste of a man who doubts himself. Willis helped him with angry deftness. To his eyes, this old surgeon was a brute.

As they bound the unresisting patient to the improvised operating-table, Jourdé felt

that he could now do his part without flinching, but at the last moment he could not restrain a glance into Emil's face.

"We will use ze anæszetic," he said quietly, and the operation was delayed while he arranged the appliances.

Through all the strained apprehension of the next fifteen minutes the old doctor felt an exultant thrill to see that his hands had not forgotten their craft.

The operation went well. It was pauseless work, and when it was done young Willis drew a long breath. He raised his eyes to find the older man still watching. It was not till Emil's eyelids trembled open for a moment that Jourdé answered Willis's glance with inexpressible relief and joy. Then his face changed. Something beyond Willis held his eyes, and the younger man can never forget the look. He hurried to Jourdé, and, putting a firm arm around him, drew him into a chair.

"Eet — eet's — notting," Jourdé said, in the monotonous tones of one who wrestles with unconsciousness.

"Eet — weell — pass," he murmured, weakly pushing away the restoratives that Willis pressed upon him. "I — tell — you," Jourdé's thought was impatient, but his voice flatted in spite of him, "let — me — be."

Willis "let him be." There was room for much pity in this young practitioner's heart, much appreciation of a pain that he saw and did not ask to understand. It was with no feeling of rebuff that he turned to devote his attention to Georget, who was coming to himself in queer waste places, and felt grateful for a clasping hand.

In that moment Jourdé's impatient aversion for Willis gave way to a conviction that the blundering, undeveloped young fellow had possibilities of growth, and was made of hardier stuff than he himself.

The unceasing vigilance with which Jourdé watched over Emil's convalescence caused no little dissatisfaction among his other patients, who found themselves suddenly turned over to young Willis's tender mercies. But when Emil's case had been discharged, they were more impressed to hear that Dr. Jourdé's sign had disappeared.

The evening that he dismissed Emil, Jourdé, in frock coat and patent leathers, entered his little hermitage on Bayou Marie. Ten minutes later, in scarlet shirt and barefooted, he emerged, pruning-shears in hand.

The August storm had worked havoc with his fig-trees, and Jourdé went among them contritely, trimming off broken twigs, and bandaging with long strips of sail-cloth

the limbs that had been shattered by the wind.

It was here that Willis generally found him, for the younger man fell into a habit of coming to confer with Jourdé, and the old bench under the trees was the scene of many animated discussions, and many discourses in Jourdé's quaint English.

"Always at those trees," laughed Willis, coming up the little path from the landing one afternoon.

Jourdé, perched in the croft of a stumpy tree, answered not a word until Willis stood just beneath him; then he said:

"Weell you support zees leem' one minute, eef you please, docteur" —

"Got to come off, has it?" said Willis, reaching up and bracing a strong hand against the limb.

He was often called upon to assist at some such piece of surgery, and while Jourdé worked Willis would consult with him in regard to special patients in the neighborhood. He did this now, talking above the muffled squealing of old Jourdé's fine-tooth saw, while Jourdé nodded or frowned over his sawing as he listened. The tree dismembered of that limb, he allowed his little round figure to drop limply to earth, and repaired with Willis to his well-loved bench.

"Zey are eemproving," said Jourdé, looking fondly at the trees.

"They begin to feel your breath again," replied Willis, smiling. He had come to take an indulgent interest in Jourdé's fig-trees.

"Ah, you know eet, zen!" cried the old man; adding hastily, "eet ees a supersteection, zat ees all. Eet ees not true, it cannot be. Eet is too unreasonaable."

"I suppose it would be hard to prove," Willis admitted, "but I can't help liking it."

"As for proove, zere ees plenty of zat. Plenty of cases zat might be considered proove. For one, you never see ze feeg-tree leeving at a deserted 'ouse. Oh, zere ees much proove, but eet ees too unreasonaable! Zere mus' be some ozer cause."

Willis would have continued the argument, but old Jourdé turned the conversation to the subject on which Willis had come to confer, and the young physician soon forgot the fig-trees and the quaint superstition that clung to them.

It was sunset when Willis untied his pirogue and turned his face down the shimmering Marie, in its golden evening mist.

"Ah, well," sighed Jourdé, as he watched the rise and fall of the glistening paddle, "at least I have courage to be surgeon to my trees. There is other life besides the human.

Why should I seek responsibilities that are too great?"

He turned back along the darkening path.

As his eyes fell on his gray-limbed, shadowy patients, his good face cleared.

"It is strange," he murmured, plucking a last year's leaf from the many-trunked patriarch. "It is very strange—they were withering without me."

He shook his head.

"It is not true — it cannot be ; but it *is*."

THE CAPTOR OF OLD PONTOMOC

PONTOMOC BAY was a grimy map of log-strewn sand-bars. At the mouth of Bayou Porto a schooner was laid up on the bare, muddy bottom of the lesser channel. A slender thread of smoke rose from her deck, where men were starting a charcoal furnace in the lee of the cargo. The north wind, that had driven the water out to deep sea, rattled uselessly in her rigging.

Up the shrunken main channel a boy and girl were idling in a skiff. The marshes on their uncovered roots made high walls about them, topped with the drift of a storm-tide, or crushed by stranded logs. The girl was paddling softly at the command of the boy, who sat in the bow, holding his gun ready for a shot. They were creeping up on a mud hen that was feeding along the exposed shoals at the base of the marsh. Suddenly the shy-looking brown bird spread its strong wings and, with a derisive scream, wavered swiftly upward into flight.

The boy fired, but his shot fell short and he shook his fist after the lessening fleck over

the marsh. "I wouldn't mind losing you, you imp," he cried, "if you didn't taunt me with it. But I'll hurt you yet."

"Don't try any more, Bert," pleaded the girl. "You'll never hit one, and we've wasted too much time already. I have lots to do at the store to-day — if I don't finish posting my books father will be so angry, and if you don't start the men to work on these logs before he gets back" — she gave a strong sweep with her oar as she spoke.

The boy, who had just taken the empty shells from his gun, let it clatter down unloaded beside him, and turning caught her hands. "You've cared long enough whether father was angry," he declared. "Ever since you were born you've done nothing but care, and since I was born I've done nothing but care, and since mother first saw father she has done nothing but care, and it's time it all stopped. You're eighteen years old. Did you ever have a minute of fun in your life? If you did it was before I was born. I've never seen any. There's not a nigger in Pontomoc that has worked like us or skimped like us. Where does the money go that the new mill makes? Where does the money go that the store makes? Where does the charcoal money go? You ask anybody in Pontomoc if Robert Norton is a poor man."

The girl drew her hands from the grasp that crushed them against the oar, and laid them imploringly upon her brother's.

"Bert," she said, "remember how mother keeps saying that there's something none of us understand, remember how it hurts her when we are impatient" —

"Oh, Elizabeth," the boy cried, "don't talk to me about mother; I've given up for her sake and given up for her sake and given up for her sake, until he thinks there is nothing I cannot be made to do. Remembering that he was decently thoughtful once when he was making love to her may make it easier for her to stand him, but I tell you I've never seen him any way but the way he is now, and when he capped everything by putting you down in that hole of a store to keep books, just to spy on poor Stewart, I made up my mind not to turn my hand over again to please him."

The girl looked up along the desolate, uplifted marshes to the dazzling blue of the sky. "I don't mind any more," she said. "Mr. Stewart has been very kind."

"That's not the question," said Bert doggedly. They were silent a moment, and over the marsh there settled down to them the tinkle of a cow-bell from the hidden shore. Bert touched his sister's arm and

pointed ahead to a black dot bobbing up and then disappearing from the surface of the water. "Do you see that duck?" he whispered. "Now, just try if you can paddle softly for once and give me a fair shot."

Elizabeth glanced forward and was just dipping her paddle, when they heard the strenuous thud of approaching oars and the black dot disappeared for good.

"Darn the luck!" growled Bert; "the fool might have known somebody would be hunting when there's such a low tide."

Elizabeth bent nervously to her paddling. "That sounds like father," she said.

"But you know very well it isn't," retorted the boy. "If he had started from the head of the bayou before daybreak he couldn't be here yet."

As if in answer, a skiff leaped toward them round a curve in the marsh. The tall, gray boatman scarcely looked to the right or to the left, but, reaching his long, insatiable oars tensely after the water, threw his gnarled body forward and back, forward and back, forward and back.

The boy and girl sat cowed and waiting. The oarsman almost passed them by, then he stopped mid-stroke and fought against the boiling water. "Are you crazy?" he shouted, "are you blind?" He stretched

out his hand toward the floating logs in the channel, the logs that were scattered over the shoals and through the marsh. "Don't you see that all I own or hope to own is afloat or stuck in this cursed water and sand? Don't you care whether you have bread to-morrow or your mother starves? Must you shoot the last cent I have into the air, and waste time that is worth dollars? Come!" He clenched one hard hand round his son's arm and drew the boy on to the seat beside him. "Go!" and he gave the girl's boat a mighty push up stream.

Elizabeth bent forward with eyes aflame. "Remember," she cried; "Bert, remember!" But Bert looked at the oar on which he was throwing his weight, and she met her father's tortured, impatient gaze. Then the marsh hid them, and she was alone.

As she rowed onward, it was as if she had suddenly wakened to the actual havoc of the storm. The drifting logs in some places almost filled the channel; the tide had lifted one unbroken boom sidewise, half upon the marsh; when she came out in sight of the high banks of the bayou, she saw that the water had been above them too, scattering its freight along them. A few red-shirted men, routed out by her father's early summons, were already rafting together

the floating logs, and there was something of Norton's forced haste in the way they pounded the iron "dogs" into the wood with flashing axes, waded hip deep in the numbing water, or leaped dripping from log to log with the clanking chains. It was hard work, but necessary, and familiar enough to Elizabeth; yet she resented more keenly than ever the needless stress with which everything was pushed under the direction of her father. What gave him the power to bend every one to his purpose? What had turned that indomitable will on this long, fierce hunt for money? Her counsel to Bert had taken the last of her forbearance, and Bert's words repeated themselves to her, burdened with all the mysterious, uncalled-for hardship of their lives: "Ask anybody in Pontomoc if Robert Norton is a poor man."

At the landing where Elizabeth left her boat, another force of men were working, aided by half the loafers of the village. The heavy flat boat which ran as a ferry across the bayou had been grounded far inshore, and the crowd was prying and dragging to get it back within reach of some ordinary tide. Elizabeth saw with misery that they redoubled their efforts as she came up. Mr. Stewart, at the store, was the only man in Pontomoc who went his quiet way unstartled

by the approach of Robert Norton or his children.

Stewart was at work in the deserted store, weighing out and wrapping up pounds and half-pounds and quarter-pounds of various groceries, ready for the petty custom of the workmen when the evening rush should come. As Elizabeth entered, he came around the counter to shake hands with her.

"And how are you this morning?" he asked, as he always did, "and how is Mrs. Norton?"

"As usual," Elizabeth answered, scarcely touching his hand. His gentle, staid courtesy had come to be a refuge to her at ordinary times, but when overwrought by thought of her father she could not bear it. Stewart had been crushed under Norton's feet more cruelly than the rest of Pontomoc.

"Has the storm done much damage?" he went on easily. "I haven't been out to see, but I notice that everybody else has gone down to the bayou to find out what is going on. Do you know, Miss Elizabeth, when I was a boy nobody would have thought of going to the bayou after a storm. It was all a rush for the front beach to see how many bath-houses were gone; but now the question is if the logs have broken loose" —

"They have broken loose," said Elizabeth

very slowly, "and I wish they could never be rafted together again."

Stewart did not heed her. Since they had been thrown upon each other's mercy in the little store, he had been studying her, and he knew that sometimes her moods of revolt were soothed if he just talked on and on.

"I am an old-fashioned man," he said, going to the door and looking down the shady, silent street. "Business had no attractions for me until necessity picked me up and threw me into it, as one might say; but even I can see what a wonderful thing your father is doing for poor old Pontomoc. Why, look here!" He went back behind the counter, unlocked the till, picked up a handful of pennies and jingled them in the air. "Do you know that it is only since your father has owned the store that we have had pennies here? How could we sell things at small profit when we were content to make change within five cents?"

Elizabeth laughed dryly. "Be careful that you don't lose one of those pennies," she suggested; "if you do you'll have to cheat somebody out of one to make up for it, and you'll not like that."

Stewart let the dingy things slide into the till and walked hastily to where Elizabeth had perched herself at the high, box-like

desk. She looked dully at his fine, thin, remonstrating face.

"Don't you know," he begged, "that it will be much pleasanter if you do not talk like that?"

The girl dropped her chin in her hand and turned away from him. She had a strong face, like her father's. "If you fancy," she said, in a low voice, "that it is pleasanter in one way than another, you must think strangely of me."

"Of you?"

"Do you think every kind, thoughtful thing you have done for me has not cut me like a knife? Do you think it is pleasant for me even to look in the face of the man my father has wronged?"

"You're mistaken," cried Stewart, with a flush of pain. "Your father did what any Northern man would have done. I showed my incapacity, and he followed up his business rights."

He caught a glimpse of the hot color rushing to her averted face, and then she buried her forehead on her arms.

"Oh, you are cruel to the North," she said, in a muffled voice. "Everybody knows how he followed up his business rights. This store is yours. I don't care what tricks of law or business say it's not."

"Nothing belongs to the incapable," Stewart answered.

"You are not incapable. Do you think if you were, father would have you here? You are only honest."

Stewart gave one apprehensive glance out at the empty street, then laid his hand on the girl's bowed shoulder. "Oh, you poor child," he said, "I am not honest. I am breaking trust every day."

Elizabeth looked up full of incredulous questioning. Her eyes met his and brimmed slowly with unwonted tears.

"Don't pity me," he said gently, taking away his hand. "I never meant to pain you with it, but now I wish I could show you how knowing and loving you have made up for everything. Don't pity me."

Elizabeth leaned toward him with a face in which all the depths of love and sorrow were stirred.

Outside came a rattle of hoofs. "Stewart!" shouted Norton's voice.

The girl opened her ledger. "God pity us both," she said.

"Get on to this horse," said Norton, as Stewart hastened to the door, "and ride out the old country road and send me every one of my men that is chopping in the woods. Have them come here for spades and shovels,

and then report at the mill. Those that don't get there by noon will be turned off. I've got to cut a deeper channel to the mill. At this tide no logs can get in, and we've got to saw night and day till our big order is off, if we have to carry the logs by hand. Don't spare yourself or the horse. Be back at ten o'clock — I've work for you to-day."

"And the store?" asked Stewart, his white hand on the pommel.

Norton's eyes cursed him. "I'll see to that," he said.

For the first time in their connection Stewart quailed, and, thinking only of Elizabeth, jumped into the saddle. As he galloped away the girl came out at her father's call.

"You'll have charge here to-day," said Norton. "Work at the books and don't let customers cheat you. I need your boat, so you'll stay until you are called for."

"Very well," said Elizabeth.

Norton strode away towards the bayou as if he were pursued. Elizabeth watched him, regardless of whether he looked back or not. Her sad new joy gave her a deeper understanding of what her mother had borne, and of the constant illumined patience in which she had lived. Her father's forward-stretching figure pressed out of sight beneath the live-oaks, but the passionate strain of his face

and voice haunted the girl. If, in other years, all of that force had been given to love, it was not strange that the answering love had endured, bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things. Elizabeth had been very tender of her mother's faithfulness. She had set her face to lines of patience, to save her mother from pain. She had laughed when anger choked her, to tide her mother over the endless harrying of their days. How she had pitied her mother! But she had never trusted with her. Now, with a feeling that her grasp of life had broadened, she found herself believing in her father because he once had loved. Yet his face had never been so ruthlessly hard before.

Sleep-loving Bayou Porto and tranquil old Pontomoc knew no rest from the spur of Norton's presence. Now in his skiff, now tearing from the village to the mill on horseback, he seemed to be in all places, and even when he left a group of men they felt no lessening of tension, but expected each instant the sting of his voice behind them. The bayou was alive with shouts of workmen and the ringing of their tools. At the mill the force which Stewart had raised scattered in eagerly and fell to work. By eleven o'clock all of the gang except its foreman were digging in the trench. Stewart was there in

temporary command, but shovelling away like the rest. He noticed that the men kept glancing up a little apprehensively in the direction from which the foreman should be coming.

"'Pears like Tom Largeon is a-takin' of his time," one fellow kept repeating nervously. "'Pears like he might a-knowed the old man wouldn't stand no triflin' to-day."

"What do you think is keeping him?" Stewart asked. "I saw his boy, and he said Largeon was at home and he would tell him."

One of the quiet creoles turned his keen, close-set eyes on Stewart. "An' you didn' 'ear 'im ride off de wrong way t'rough de woods on dat lil pony of him, a-hollerin'?"

"Was that he?" asked Stewart.

"Yas," answered the creole, "all de boy in de woods dey know Largeon w'en 'e call."

"Did you hear him? What do you make of it?" Stewart asked his next neighbor, the anxious man. "He couldn't have been drunk."

"Well, I hain't seen him right hollerin' drunk for twenty year, but I 'low he *could* ha' been drunk if he'd a-wanted tuh," the anxious man returned. "But hit looks like Tom Largeon has been a-workin' for the ole man too long to be a-gettin' drunk w'en he knows in reason that the logs is loose, even if he did git mad at the ole man's faultin' him

yesterday; an' I disremember ever a-seeing the ole man so nigh clean foolish over the logs as he is this mornin'. Gee"—the man's mouth shut like a spring.

"No talking! You're all losing time!" fell Norton's voice from the bank. "Where's Largeon? Didn't you see him, Stewart?"

"I left word for him, and you can depend on Largeon," Stewart answered; "he'll be here."

Norton ground his teeth together in a conquering physical effort for calmness. Then he beckoned to Stewart. "You are not used to managing men," he said, in a checked voice, "and you don't know how to get the best work out of them as I do, or even Largeon; but you must keep them from playing off altogether, and losing their time in talk, until Largeon comes. He is taking advantage of my situation to play off himself, but he'll learn better. Keep them all thinking that I'll be here the next minute," and then, with a few directions about the work itself, Norton was off again, taking the boat and leaving his horse hitched to a tree.

The mastery of will over the wrath of a strong nature is sometimes more terrible to see than an outbreak of passion, and Norton's quiet, combined with the strange look of torture in his eyes, sent Stewart back to

the men with a new, besetting fear for Elizabeth. There was something wrong that her father himself recognized, in his body, soul, or mind. He was struggling against something within himself.

Outside of the bayou, off a sandy point that jutted into the bay, Bert had charge of one of the gangs of logging men. Norton's house stood on another point, across a little inlet, but Norton had not taken time to go home, although since the night before, when the storm caught him at an upper logging camp, he had worked ceaselessly without rest or food. His wife had spent the morning at the window with a field-glass, watching the bay and bayou. For her they were not merely the setting, but were sentient actors in the fate-driven tragedy of her husband's life. She saw him come and go; once she saw Bert appeal to him, trying, she supposed, to suggest some different plan of work; failing, the boy went on sullenly, unlike the other men. Father and son were both in the cold, steel-gray, sparkling water, when Bert suddenly threw his axe into the boat and turned half staggering toward the beach. She could see Norton shout at him and Bert keep on without noticing. When he reached the sand, he dropped down where the men were dragging with their grappling hooks at the

stranded logs. Norton followed, picked the boy up, carried him back to the boat, and rowed with him toward the house. She knew what had happened. Bert had taken a chill.

She met them at the door without a word, and to Bert's half-faint perception she had never looked so tall, pale, large-eyed, and executive. There was something cruel to him in the swift deftness of her touch as she helped his father get him into bed. The boy wondered dizzily if two of the glistening, compassionless, unceasing saws at the awful mill would not chafe him and ply him with hot drinks and plasters in just as sympathetic a way. He could have cried for a little mothering, the sweet, tender ways that had been his comfort always. But once, when he threw them both aside impatiently and tottered to his feet and almost fell, she cried out to his father, "Robert! Robert!" in the soft, piercing mother-cry that makes the heart stand still. When Norton laid him back on his bed she threw herself beside the boy, kissing his cold hands and bluish, sunken cheeks, and telling him to lie still, as if he felt that he could ever move again. He smiled at her feebly and was content. When she raised her head Norton had gone.

Throwing a final covering over Bert, she

ran out and overtook her husband half-way to the boat.

"You're not leaving him?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Norton, without slackening speed.

"To get the doctor?" she asked, linking her arm into his and hastening beside him, one hand clutched tight in the folds of her dress.

"No," answered Norton, trying roughly to shake himself free. "Bert will be all right in two or three hours; it's simply a chill from the cold water. He takes it like a baby; I've worked through plenty like it. Don't drag on me. I must get back."

Mary Norton dropped his arm and stepped in front of him. The patience that had lasted almost twenty years was burned from her eyes like a film; they shone on him clear and wide with wrath. "What are you getting back to?" she asked.

"Work," said Norton grimly, and then her new face caught him and puzzled him. "Why, Mary," he began, in a gentler voice.

"What are you working for?" she demanded. "My comfort? Look at me!" She swept her arms apart over her faded calico dress and thin, worn figure. Then she pointed to the house. "His comfort? Oh, he has a happy life, a care-free, boyish life to bless his father for! Do you remember

how you lived when you were a boy, what freedom you had, and opportunities? Do you remember the schools you had and the friends you had? And Elizabeth—does it cost you this effort to keep her where she is, the jest and the scorn of the town? Robert Norton, I have kept my peace too long, and now you shall tell me what it means.”

As Norton listened to her a slow anguish rose and conquered the driven look on his face. All the tension of his muscles relaxed. He put his hand to his head in a motion of utter weariness and spoke to her in a broken voice.

“Mary,” he said, and that was all.

“I am waiting,” she answered. For a moment they looked each other in the eyes, his pitiful with appeal, hers unrelenting.

Suddenly she stretched out her arms to him. “Tell me what it is, Robert,” she pleaded. “Since we were married you have been keeping something from me. I felt it in the first kiss you gave me when you came home to marry me. Haven’t you seen how I have waited and trusted you? Haven’t I been faithful enough to deserve trust too? Oh, Robert, it would be easier for you to bear it if I were helping you! I know it’s nothing wrong. I don’t care whether it is anything wrong, only tell me, tell me!”

Norton lifted up his hand to check her. "I'm so tired, Mary," he said simply, "and I've so much to do to-day. I don't know what you mean by my having a secret. When have I ever thought of anything but you and the children? What could I work for except to make you happy? I thought you always knew that I meant everything for the best. You all do work hard, dear, but don't I too? By and by we'll get into easier times and take things easier, if I could only put aside enough to make you safe in a rainy day. I—I don't know you, Mary, when you reproach me like this. You take all the nerve for work out of me, but I must go on."

In her appeal Mary had gone close to her husband, but he seemed too physically weary to touch her. Now she clung to him a moment entreatingly. "You will go and get the doctor, just for my sake, won't you?" she begged; "and then come back to me and rest. You are so worn, and the work will go on without you."

Norton gathered himself into his old tenseness, and freed himself from her impatiently. "The doctor!" he cried. "Didn't I tell you that Bert doesn't need a doctor? Don't you know that we can't afford unnecessary expense? And I *must* work, or all that we own will go to ruin. Don't tempt me!"

The hunted look had come back to him intensified. His wife turned from it and groped her way toward the house, blinded by her tears. Suddenly Norton followed her and caught her close.

"Don't you see how hard you make it for me?" he asked, with passion. "Don't you love me? Don't you trust me any more?"

She let her head fall against his breast and lifted to him a face which was brilliant with supreme renunciation. Hope, and the hope of hope, were dead, but faith abided. "I trust you, I love you," she whispered. "Kiss me and go." And Norton kissed her wildly, snatching the time like a thief.

The force at the mill had worked in the ditch until there were but a few yards of bar dividing them from the low water in the channel. The wind had held north all the morning, although it had grown light, but now it seemed to be veering, and Stewart urged the men to increased effort, for he knew that if it reached the east or south it would help the buffeted tide back into the shallow inland waters. Their work would seem lost if they had to leave it unfinished to be taken up in some other time of stress. Unfortunately the men were now so far out from the bank that by straightening they commanded a long stretch of the bayou with

no Norton in sight. They were tired, and even the certainty that they would be called the more severely to account when he came did not weigh much against the godsend of his long absence, and they fell into a jogging gait that was maddening to Stewart.

"It's mighty queer what's tuck 'em," said Tilman, the easy-going man who had the most unbounded time for anxiety; "if Largeon was here, hit wouldn't look so strange fer the ole man to stay away; an' if the ole man was here we wouldn't have no inclination to be a-studyin' 'bout Largeon; but with 'em both gone, hit 'pears like we're kind o' lost. Don't you sense hit that-a-way, Mr. Stewart? I declare I'd like to know what's run off with Largeon." He raised to his tiptoes in one more survey down the bayou for Norton, and up the bank where the road ran alongside and Largeon's mounted figure would be visible from far. "Gee whittakers, boys, they're both a-comin'," he shouted. "I bet you my doag the ole man gets in ahead."

As if each saw the other, the new-comers strained for their goal; the men fell to work in earnest, but stretched up again and again for a swift glance at the race; Tilman alone dropped his shovel and watched unremittingly, reporting to the rest. Norton, who

knew the channel too well to glance over his shoulder, did not see him, and Largeon, throwing himself forward over his little mustang, rode for all he was worth until the lumber drying in the millyard halted him abruptly. With a cracked scream he drove the spurs into his pony and tried to leap the pile of boards. Every man dropped his tools at the sound. Stewart started to run up the bank, but half a dozen men caught him back.

"Don't touch him," shouted Tilman; "he's ravin' drunk. Let him an' the beast fight hit out alone."

"We must get him off and away," urged Stewart, struggling to free himself. "Norton will land in a minute. Let me go."

But the men held on to him. "Largeon's mighty slow to mad, but when he's madded or drunk you'd just better clear the track," Tilman remonstrated, craning his neck to watch without losing his grip on Stewart's arm. "Lord, but he's a-waxin' hit to the pore beast! Boys, some of you had ought to stop him. He's off'n her and a-takin' a piece o' scantlin' to her."

Stewart flung himself free, but was snatched back by half the men. The other half ran up the bank, roused at last by the shrill outcries of the mustang under Largeon's awful blows.

Ahead of them, like a resistless bolt from the bayou, rushed Norton.

"Stop that!" he shouted. "Stop that! Let that horse go!"

"That's my beast, damn you," whooped Largeon, "and I'm a free man to-day, I'm a free man!"

They faced each other across the leaping, bleeding horse, and all the laborers drew back. Norton's face was gray with furious command: Largeon's whole mighty frame shook with the rebellion that flared in his opened face.

"Let her go!" thundered Norton.

With a yell Largeon loosed the pony, and as she darted from between them, he raised his bloody timber and swung it fair at Norton's head.

"I'm a free man," he shrieked, and as Norton fell he raised the club again, but it dropped to his side and he ran into the woods. "I've done it again," he cried madly, "I've done it again!"

"After him! After him!" shouted Stewart, and a dozen men dashed off into the woods. The rest crowded round Norton's prostrate figure, while Stewart knelt beside it with a face almost as ghastly as its own.

"Stand aside," ordered the young man sharply. "Seymour, take the horse I had

and get the doctor, but don't speak a word to anybody else in the village. Understand?"

"Stop!" said a husky voice behind them all, and the men, turning, jumped as one to grapple Largeon. "Leave me alone," he ordered; "I've come to stay. Seymour, you get that old French doctor that's just opened his shop by the post-office. Don't bother with the young man—he's a fool; get the old one."

"Get one of them, and quick," Stewart said, and Seymour galloped off. Largeon pressed in close to Norton.

"No, he's not quite dead," said Stewart fiercely, "but don't begin to breathe too easy. I doubt if all the doctors in the world can keep you from hanging—don't touch him!"

But Largeon had his hand on Norton's heart. As he took it away he leaned toward the fallen face. "Old man," he said in a strange, tender voice, "I'm afeard there ain't much chance for you this time. You had ought to have knowed me better." Then, as if the long wound on Norton's head had a fascination for him, he made as if to touch it, but recoiled and flung himself on the ground beside the death-like figure, his own rugged form convulsed.

Stewart gave a bitter sound like a laugh and touched Largeon with his foot. "Keep

guard of him, boys," he said. "I don't know what's brought him back, but he's likely to make a new break in some direction. Keep guard of him."

"'E will not go," said one of the older creoles. "'E've somesing on de mind. I've often t'ought, me, dat Largeon 'ave somesing on de mind, or 'e couldn' stan' so much from de ole man."

Largeon lifted himself squarely. "Yo're right," he said; "I have had somethin' on my mind. When Bob Norton first came down here a-prospectin' I guided him in the piney woods and I helped him raft his first pen o' logs over to Potosi; an' one day I got tearin' drunk, 'cause the water was cold, an' I batted him over the head with a pole until I thought he was dead, an' that turned me sober. When he got well he wouldn't say anything about it. He kept me on a-workin' for him, but he ain't never been the same man since. That's what I've had on my mind." His face quivered, but he stared defiantly at Stewart. "An' if you think," he added, "that I'm gallows-skeered, yo're way off. I can't be hung too quick to suit me after I've seed that the right thing's done by Bob Norton."

The men stood silent in a ring about Norton, Largeon, and Stewart. The clear winter sun beat down on the stacks of odor-

ous lumber, and the shadows of the pine-trees flickered over them. The woods pressed close to the bayou around the stirless mill.

"And nobody knew of this but you two?" Stewart asked at last.

"Yes," said Largeon, "the little old French doctor knowed, but I reckon he was used to keepin' secrets, an' he never told. Nobody knowed he was a doctor then, — they say he'd made some sort of a oath not to doctor, an' he's only just broke it, — but his cabin was the only one near, so I took Bob there. The little Frenchman wouldn't touch him, but he told me what to do, so I brought Bob round, an' that's why I know he's the man to have now."

"He's cured some mighty bad cases since he begun to doctor there in town," one of the men ventured, in a subdued voice; and then silence laid a hand upon them, while they listened for the sound of hoofs. Stewart's thoughts escaped from the man at his feet into an agony of pity for Elizabeth.

At last they caught the swinging rush of a horse. Largeon started up from the crouching guard he had kept by Norton, and every one turned to see the short, chubby French doctor clinging desperately to the saddle. The eager men ran out to meet him. He clambered down and hurried to Norton with

a heated face that grew very pale as he knelt by the wounded man, examining him briefly. Stewart and Largeon waited as near him as they dared. He turned to Largeon, laying a hand on his shoulder.

"I weel do w'at I can," he said gravely; "a-ah, 'ow I was a br-rute — you know ze time!" Then he told Stewart that Norton must be taken home as quickly as possible.

"Some one should go ahead to prepare Mrs. Norton," Stewart said anxiously, "and some one must go to the village to tell his daughter."

"Write a word to the girl — one of the boys can take it to her — an' then take her home," said Largeon decisively. "You go yourself to Mis' Norton, an' tell Bert if you meet up with him on the bayou. Doc here'll look out for the old man. I'll carry him down to the boat when it's fixed, an' then some o' the boys can take me along to the lockup. I'll go easy now the old doc is on hand."

Stewart had torn a leaf from his note-book and was writing on it. "Yes," he said abstractedly, his mind full of its own pain, "I reckon that's as good as we can do all round. Here, Narcisse, take this to Miss Elizabeth, and then shut the store for her and bring her home. And, Narcisse, I can trust you — tell her a good deal of how things are,

but don't frighten her — do your best. Doctor, I'll start at once."

He was hurrying toward the landing when some one caught his arm. "For God's sake," cried Largeon hoarsely, "don't go without saying that you'll keep sending the boys over to tell me how he's comin' on. I'll carry him, dead like he is, down to the boat, an' I'll never see him again. If he dies I'll hang, if he gets well I'll skip the country. In God's name tell 'em both, if I go, that I'll never blacken their daylight again."

"Largeon," said Stewart, with impulsive pity — and then the anguish of the rough man dumbed him. No possibility of the future could reach back and change the past, and what comfort could Stewart give out of his quiet, self-controlled life? He passed his hand gently over Largeon's. "I'll tell them," he said, "and I'll keep you posted. Good-by."

"Good-by," said Largeon, and went back to stay by Norton until the doctor had finished making such a bed as he could of coats and pine-straw in one of the boats. Just as it was finished a party of men from the village came up excitedly, and one of them touched the watcher's arm.

"I arrest you on charge of assault with intent to kill," said the new-comer.

"All right," said Largeon, "but just stand back a minute." And as if he alone had the right, he lifted Norton's limp body and carried it solemnly to the boat. The men who were to go with the doctor took their places, and Largeon pushed them off into the returning tide. Then he felt the constable's hand on his arm again. With his needless escort surrounding him, he walked back toward the village, the unemployed workmen trailing behind.

While Stewart was tying his boat at Norton's pier, Mrs. Norton came out of the house and down the path as if she expected him. Her face had the calm of one who has seen the end of things. "Tell me out here what it is," she said; "Bert is very sick and has just begun to doze."

Stewart told her as mercifully as he could. "I know," she said softly; "come in and help me get ready for him, but be very still."

Stewart followed her in a sort of awe, and they made what changes were necessary in Norton's room. Then the boat came. Norton was carried to his bed, and the house stood in death-like pause while the doctor began his work. Norton's skull was seriously fractured, and splinters of bone would have to be removed. It was just where Largeon's blow had fallen twenty years before. The

skull had thickened in healing so as to leave a pressure on the brain. Seeing this, the old hermit surgeon, who had scarcely looked at Norton save the once when he had stood apart directing the awkward bandaging of that first wound, now felt himself side by side with Largeon, accountable to all who had suffered from the awful stress of twenty years.

Elizabeth's white face appeared in the doorway, frightened yet strong. Her mother sent her up to watch with Bert, who was tossing from one feverish nap to another, waking just long enough to feel injured and call his mother if he found himself alone. When Elizabeth entered he was lying quietly, with bright roving eyes that fastened upon her without surprise. Finally he spoke.

"Wasn't it a pity?" he said reminiscently; "I'd sure of had that duck if father hadn't come."

"Yes, it was a pity," the girl answered sadly, and slipping from her chair she laid her face beside Bert's on the pillow. He reached over and patted her caressingly.

"What's the matter with my sis?" he asked. "All used up about father again? Don't mind so much; we always have mother anyway."

Elizabeth trembled from head to foot. Her mother had told her not to let Bert

know. Bert's hand rested upon her like Stewart's. She closed her eyes. At last she felt his touch softly slipping away. She sat up, and finding that he had dropped asleep, she stole downstairs.

There was very little to learn. The doctor worked with the dexterity of one who knew his skill and loved it. Mrs. Norton and Stewart stood by, alertly watchful. The lapping of the ripples on the shore came through the open window like the heart-beats of one who listens. Elizabeth went in and took the place that was hers by her mother's side.

At last the doctor laid by his instruments and motioned to Stewart to follow him. They went outside together and their voices murmured earnestly; then Stewart came back, leaving the doctor with his head sunk on his breast. The two women had been standing at the bedside, hand gripped in hand, but as Stewart entered, Mrs. Norton swayed a little and sank on to a chair. He went to her with a look that was stranger than joy.

"The doctor tells you to hope," he said, "and not for life only." He paused and looked across to Elizabeth. She stared back almost in terror, but Mary Norton quivered to her feet.

"Do you mean?" she tried to say, but there was only a motion of her lips. Her eyes besought him.

Stewart steadied himself with his hand on a chair. "Has—has he changed in any way since you first knew him?" he began falteringly; but, like one who meets the returning dead, she swept him aside and knelt beside her husband.

The bay rippled on and the shadows lengthened. There was a tremor over Norton's face and he sighed. Once his eyelids fluttered, but life did not look out to say whether it was the soul of youth or manhood that was struggling back. Once he moved his hand slightly, seeking something. She took it in hers as if she feared to frighten it.

At last, slowly, wonderingly, his eyes opened, and across the gulf of years her lover smiled.

A LITTLE MOUNTAIN MAID

THE great mountains peered over one another's shoulders and watched Georgia Blount at her play. Bald Top, Crab's Claw, and Old Surly stood nearest; sometimes they seemed so near that Georgia could talk to them, and when a low-hanging cloud shut them out of sight, or the blue autumn haze veiled them softly and held them aloof from her, she felt as other children feel when their friends turn away or refuse to tell what the thoughts are in their eyes.

A gnarled tree grew at the foot of the bluff which lifted the big dome of Copper Head above the mountain side, and between the roots of this tree Georgia had her playhouse. Day in and day out no one ever came in sight of it except the mountains, but Georgia was never lonely. In the mornings she had to take all her dolls out of their beds of moss and dress them in fresh gowns of summer or autumn leaves or in stiff, fringy costumes of pine needles. She was very much in earnest about her dolls, and yet she sometimes clapped her hands and laughed when they

were dressed and leaning in a long row against one of the roots, they made such an elfin company. Some of them had nuts for heads and some of them had acorns. Some of them had been made out of the dry, rounded receptacles of a composite flower from which the florets had fallen and the winged seeds flown away, leaving only a circle of bracts for a collar and a brittle stem with two branches from which the flower ends had been nipped off for arms. These were the most fragile of Georgia's children, and it took a skilful hand to make their toilets without snapping their necks or their bodies or their limbs. Georgia could do it, for she loved them and she had been dressing them ever since she was big enough to wander off by herself up the mountain side and through the forest which separated the home clearing from the rugged boulder-strewn slope below the playhouse tree and the rock walls of the dome.

Georgia was much bigger now than when she had begun to fashion dolls for herself with chubby, awkward fingers; she was so much bigger indeed that she was fourteen years old and might have thought that she was growing up if there had been any one to suggest it to her; but she had seen no other children growing up, and the mountains did not tell her, for they themselves had taken so long to

grow that it never occurred to them that she would not continue to be a little girl for centuries and centuries to come. She had work to do at home now, and that was an interruption, yet every day, before or after work, she managed to slip off toward the forest path.

Among her dolls there was one made of corncob, and far larger than the others, and this one Georgia dressed as a man. He was a very wicked-looking doll, having deep-black eyes and nose and mouth, which she had burned into his head with a hot iron nail, and it was because he was so different from the rest that she had named him "the foreigner," after the way of Southern mountain people in speaking of any stranger who comes among them. "The foreigner" lived in a corner all by himself at the back of the tree, and Georgia always knew that when he came out among the others there was mischief brewing. Sometimes she walked slowly from the tree, gathering leaves and grasses as she went, and then as soon as she could slip away from herself hurried stealthily back, pulled the foreigner out of his corner, dropped him among the other dolls, and ran to her leaf-gathering again, so that she might be surprised when she finally returned and found how he had been ramping up and down

among her mountain people. "Oh, happy kingdom," she always cried, when she caught sight of him, "he have come agin; and oh, how he do have been a-layin' waste the land!"

One day, as she stood with her hands held up in horror at a row of mountain people who had fallen prostrate round the savage foreigner, a real stranger came out from the thick forest and stood at the edge of the natural opening around the playhouse tree. He saw her at once, barefooted, red-cheeked, with her figured bandana knotted at her throat; and he could hear her speak, but she who should have been as quick-eared as a rabbit, being just as shy, was too intent to notice the stirring of his feet in the sparse dry autumn grass.

"Folkses! folkses!" she cried out, "we's obleeged ter run him off the mounting. He's a fureigner, an' he ain't got no right hyar. We's obleeged ter run him off the mounting."

The man who listened drew a little closer, trying not to make a noise. He knew that he himself was a "fureigner," and he wanted to hear whatever the girl might say, but he laughed right out when he saw that she was pointing at the corncob doll. Georgia jumped, gave a single glance over her shoulder, and ran. It was one thing to plan

raids on an intruder whom she had dropped into the playhouse behind her own back, but this — this was another thing.

Only a little way from the tree there was a crevice in the bluff which rose behind it. Georgia knew that it wound for a long distance between a detached rock and the main bluff, and she slipped into it with such a sense of protection that she stopped a moment to wonder if she had been cowardly to leave her mountain people to two foreigners, and to listen if anything was going on. What she heard was the stranger talking.

"Now if I were you," he said, "I should just go back where I came from and not disturb a respectable community like this."

. . . Georgia peeped round the edge of the rock. He had picked her foreigner up and was smiling into his evil eyes. "So you won't tell me where you come from?" he said. "Oh, well, then, I don't like to, but I'll have to build a prison and put you into it!" He took his hat off and put it over the corncob foreigner. "If I see you trying to walk off with that calaboose while I'm building the jail," he went on threateningly, "I'll just inform you that your name is Dennis, young man, from that time on."

The sun, which had been an impartial wit-

ness of this arrest, beat down amiably upon the little mountain people with their queer natural faces, upon the calaboose, and upon a close-cropped black head bent to the building of a jail from jagged bits of stone. And it fell on Georgia's eager face and figure, for bit by bit she had come quite outside of the shadowed crevice so that she might miss nothing that this strange man did and said. But he did not look her way—he was too busy building up the jail.

“Most disgraceful thing I ever heard of,” he declared, nodding toward the captive under the hat. “You call yourself a foreigner doll, do you? Don't you know that where the foreigners come from the dolls have long curly hair, and eyes that open and shut, and red mouths, and pink cheeks, and arms and legs that bend just as well as mine do, and they wear fine stockings and shoes, and some of them walk about and say, ‘mam-ma,’ ‘pa-pa,’ — and their clothes” —

Georgia's breath was coming fast, her lips were parted, and her eyes shone. The young man who was building the jail happened to look up from his work and saw her. “It's so,” he said with a little nod. “Did you ever see any like that?”

“No,” said Georgia, shaking her head. A shadow passed over the neighboring moun-

tains. They had missed all such marvels, too.

"I have," said the young man, — "in the toy-shop windows, but I suppose you have never seen the toy-shops?"

"No," said Georgia again. She came up to where he was building. "And I never seed a man playin' with dolls afore, either," she added. "Doesn't you-uns have no work to do?"

The man had taken off a box and a bundle of queer-looking sticks which had been slung over his shoulder. Now he left the jail and began unfastening the box. "Perhaps you'll think my work a good deal the same as doll-play," he said. He took two or three boards with pictures on them from the box and leaned them up against the tree.

"Oh-h!" breathed Georgia.

"Those are the dolls I make," he said.

"But that's the livin' face of Jackson Barker," she cried, pointing to one of them. "Do *you-uns* claim ter ha' made hit look like that?"

"Yes," he answered.

"I wisht you'd tell me how."

The artist smiled. "It's just by trying — a good deal as it is with you in making dolls," he explained.

She went up close and looked at the board

with its bit of canvas tacked on it. Then she turned a puzzled face toward him. "But this hyar's *flat*," she said, "an' yet it looks like hit was standin' out. I couldn't do that—I couldn't noways make a doll out'n a flat piece o' wood."

"Would you like to see me do it?" he asked.

She nodded silently.

"Then we'll begin with the foreigner," he said. "I suppose there's no danger in letting him out now that you're here to guard him while I paint." He lifted the hat gingerly with his finger and thumb, and he and Georgia both laughed as they saw the helpless way in which the corncob doll glared up into the sunlight. Georgia set him up against the tree in the severely upright position which his construction demanded, and then stood by the stranger's elbow, watching. His bunch of brushes, the shining tubes from which he squeezed dabs of color on to his palette, the jointed easel which he put together and set up so quickly, and the camp-stool on which he seated himself, were all fascinating accessories to the making of dolls, either flat or round, and she forgot to be afraid. The artist glanced at the corn-shuck clothing of the foreigner and matched it with a mixture of paint which he blended back and forth

with a brush, while he asked Georgia questions about the mountain people. When he began to paint she drew closer and closer until she was leaning at his very elbow. Suddenly she caught her breath.

"Happy kingdom," she murmured, "you begun it flat an' now you've made him look ter be a-standin' out, an' I was keepin' watch an' yet I didn't see you when you did hit!"

He turned round to laugh at her, but when he saw that her face was not only surprised but frightened he did not laugh. "I'll paint another, and paint it slower," he said, "and then perhaps you'll see," and, stooping, he picked up the gayest of her dolls. It was dressed in dark-red oak leaves slashed with sumac, and its head was a hickory nut on which she had traced features with the faint red juice of a berry.

"I'll try to keep a pearter watch," she said gravely, as the young man touched the oak-leaf dress upon the canvas. In spite of his promise he was tempted to work so fast that for a second time she would miss "seeing him do it," but he was afraid that she would run away, and so he began explaining to her how the form began to stand out when he put in the shadows. She partly understood him, and when he finished the doll and began painting a background of rough brown bark

and shadow behind it she scarcely drew her breath.

"Oh, I seed you! I seed you this time!" she cried at the end, "an' I allow I could do hit too."

"Do you know what I want to do next?" he asked without looking up. "I want to make a picture of you."

"An' put me over where you'd look at me an' I couldn't see the picter begin to stand out?" she objected.

"You may come round once in a while and look," the young man promised. This seemed to be the keenest person he had found yet in the mountains, where most of the people in their own obscure way are shrewd.

She stood a moment pondering. "I'll do hit," she said, "if you-uns'll keep talkin' to me 'bout'n them-ar dolls — like you was talkin' to the fureigner. You know I ain't never seed a real doll. Mammy had one when she was little, 'cause she lived in the settlement, but my aunt what lives in Crook-neck Cove smashed hits head on a stone, a-playin' with hit, so I ain't never seed a doll."

Her face was very wistful — too wistful for the picture that the artist wanted. "Did I tell you about the kind that have eyes that open and shut?" he asked as he chose a brush.

Georgia looked at him eagerly. "I wisht you'd tell hit over ter me," she said.

"All right," said the stranger, "I'll tell you about every doll I ever saw" — and he began to work. Georgia could not watch the picture of her own face as it stood swiftly out from the fresh canvas on the easel, but her eyes grew each moment softer and brighter, and more bewildering to paint, as they saw another picture all in words unfold against the background of the forest. The shadows lengthened on the mountains, giving them the look of listening, too, for they had seen no dolls but Georgia's in all their years. Georgia was used to marking the hours by the mountains, as if they were great dials which had been placed in sight so that her mother would not need to scold her for coming home too late, and yet she did not notice how the purple twilight spread from the ravines and rose from slope to slope. The lower spur of Crab's Claw sank beneath it, and that meant that it was time for putting all her dolls to bed, but she was turning the coverlet of a real doll's bed, far in the North. The whole of Crab's Claw sank beneath the golden level of the sunbeams, and she should have started home, but she was where a myriad glistening lights were making all the marvellous world as white as day, and groups of people lingered

by great windows full of toys. The sunset lingered on old Bald Top in the east, just as a patient comrade lingers, and calls again.

The young man got up from his stool and stuck his brushes through his palette just as Bald Top faded into shadow and only Old Surly lifted its frowning head into the whole glory of the west. He had put the last touch on his picture, and he walked away and looked at it with a contented sigh. Georgia sprang to her feet and went around to see. She was a little numb from sitting still so long. "Happy kingdom, but hit's jus' like lookin' inter the spring er the water-bucket!" she cried nervously. "I'm right much better favored than the fureigner," she added, glancing down where he had been dropped and forgotten at the side of the tree. It seemed unreal to come back into her little home-made world after all that she had seen. Even her mountain people as they stared up with their innocent faces made her heart begin to ache. The sun was out of sight, and the stranger was packing up his box. "Is you-uns goin', too?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," he said, "I'm going up North where the dolls are! I wish I didn't have to go."

"But you've only painted one of the mounting people," she pleaded, pointing

down to them. It did not seem quite possible that after one such golden day there should be a to-morrow when she would have nothing but her silent mountains and her tiny, silent dolls.

The stranger looked at the dolls as they lay patiently waiting for their portraits in a row along the root. "And I haven't finished the jail, either," he laughed. "I shall have to leave all that to you. Good-by." He held out his hand.

Georgia took it mutely. The twilight hush had risen so that it filled the clearing round the playhouse tree. It seemed so pitiful to leave her standing all alone in it that a sudden regret came into the stranger's face. "I'm awfully sorry to go," he said.

A little sob choked Georgia. "Sorry?" she cried, "when you're goin' to see them dolls?"

The stranger put his other hand over the hand of hers he held. "You dear little child," he said, "don't you know that I'm going to send one of those dolls to you?"

"Oh!" breathed Georgia. The stranger was tramping off into the woods, but the twilight was no longer lonely now. She stood with clasped hands watching until the trees and dimness shut him out of sight.

The sunset colors lingered, but the moon

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rose over Bald Top, and, knowing that even the happiest little girl in all the mountains must not stay out after the light has left the west, it silvered the shadowy path in front of her and led her home.

THE GREAT STATE OF JOHNSING

MRS. ANDERSON HAROLD sat in her doorway flinging handfuls of corn to a crowding, elbowing flock of chickens. She was slight and bent, and once in a while, as she raised her eyes to the far spread of wild green hills, her face had a dazed expression which the people who knew her had seen in it for years. She seemed to be regarding the world with sad, uninterested surprise.

When, with the nice precision of a sower, the last handful of corn had been strewn upon the ground, she leaned forward, making a motion of eagerness which contrasted oddly with her immobile features. "Now, State o' Johnsing," she called to a small boy who was running in and out among the chickens, "whilst they's busy with the cawn, you-uns hist up that-er coop an' let out the Plymmy-rocks."

A Plymouth-rock hen and a rooster, cramped by a long imprisonment, stepped forth gingerly from their shelter, cackled, crowed, and fell to picking corn, while the flock edged round and eyed them suspi-

ciously. The small boy took a stick and made a foray among the chickens with no intent whatever but that of exercise. His mother watched him, smiling wanly. Then she turned her head and spoke to some one indoors.

"Come out hyar, Sadie Ophine," she called ;
"come out hyar an' see the Plymmy-rocks."

Sadie Ophine came to the door. She was young and rosy and defiant. "'Pears like I don't keer much bout'n the Plymmy-rocks, maw," she protested. "I've nussed them other fowls so faithful whilst you-uns was gone that hit 'pears like fowls has come to be jus' simple fowls to me, stidder Black Spanish an' Brammies an' scrub stock an' Plymmy-rocks. Didn't you-uns bring back nothin' more on-common from Union than a pair o' fowls?"

Mrs. Harold glanced uneasily at her daughter. Sadie had come to an age when happier-looking mothers than Mrs. Harold sometimes stand a little in awe of their daughters, seeing in their unworn strength and beauty and decisiveness a certain right and power which it is not easy to deny. The old woman's eyes pleaded. "I 'lowed you'd be mighty proud o' them Plymmy-rocks," she said. "Why, they costed two dollars an' a half!"

"I should ha' liked to ha' viewed the

money," said Sadie Ophine, unrelenting; "that would ha' been a most oncommon sight."

Mrs. Harold brightened weakly. "Didn't the Great State o' Johnsing show you his savings bank?" she asked.

"The Great which?" demanded Sadie Ophine. "Little Andy showed me his savings bank an' shook his thirteen pennies out an' showed 'em to me first thing; but how did you-uns jus' name little Andy?"

Mrs. Harold smiled. Little Andy seemed to be the one thing in the world that was worth smiling about. "Hit's so'thin' more he's brung back; hit's a new name. You see, over there in Union the boss o' the berry-field went around axin' us all our names, an' whar we come from, an' when he axed me little Andy peartened up like a little Banty rooster a-crowin', an' afore I could say that we come from Johnsing County little Andy up an' allowed, 'We-uns lives in the Great State o' Johnsing,' jus' the way his pore pappy uster larn him. The men all shouted, an' they got ter namin' little Andy the Great State o' Johnsing until I got wonted to hit myself."

Sadie Ophine shrugged her shoulders. "'Pears like they mus' all ha' been powerful dumb to call such a undergrowed little feller by such a overgrowed name," she declared.

The youthful contempt of her face changed to sternness. "Ain't you truly made no money, maw," she asked, "'ceptin' them thirteen cents in little Andy's bank?"

"He made 'em all by his little self," said Mrs. Harold, "an' the men all 'lowed to him that he had ought to have a savings bank to keep 'em in, an' he wanted hit so bad that 'peared like hit would be mighty *on*kind not to git it fur him, an' then the Plymmy-rocks costed two dollars an' a half, 'cause they'se got a right smart string o' forebears, an' livin's mighty high thar in Union. Hit did look some days like I was a-makin' a pile o' money pullin' strawberries, an' I declare hit 'pears mos' like somebody had stole hit, fur I cain't see as I've brung back a cent 'ceptin' the Plymmy-rocks an' them airnin's in the Great State o' Johnsing's savings bank."

Once in a while Sadie Ophine was sorry for her mother. Good-hearted young people are sometimes touched to indulgence by the folly of the old. She walked inside so that she would not have to meet her mother's faded eyes. "The neighbors has all been a-sendin' over to see if you was home, maw," she said. "'Pears like they has all growed mighty fond of the things you borried to go with. The Kimmels wants a sight of their wagon, an' the Rendlemans 'low hit's time to plough the

cawn, an' they talk like they couldn't noways plough hit with anything freskier than the ole nag they loaned you, an' the Reeses seems to be skeered less'n you-uns might travel roun' so long that you'd wear out their wagon-kivver; an' I'll tell you what's the matter of the last one of 'em — they've got the idee that if their plunderment is lef' hyar over-night the sheriff'll think hit belongs to we-uns an' 'll come an' levy on hit fur debt — jus' 's if the sheriff an' everybody else in Johnsing County didn't know that all the property we ever had or ever is goin' to have on airth is fowls." Back in the darkness of the cabin she shivered with disgust. "If angels has wings anything like chickens," she muttered, "I'd a heap ruther go whar the feathers 'ud git singed off."

"Yore pore pappy liked 'em, Sadie Ophine," said Mrs. Harold.

"Eph Wilkinson's beginnin' to take a fancy to 'em, too," said Sadie Ophine pointedly.

Mrs. Harold rose in quivering haste. "Sadie Ophine," she whispered, "you-uns don't think, does you, that he's a-goin' to try to levy on us fur the store debt?"

"Yes, maw, he 'lows he's got ter be paid," Sadie Ophine answered, "an' I 'lowed to him that you-uns would bring plenty o' money back with you from Union, an' stidder that" —

the girl's fresh voice sharpened. "Oh! maw," she cried, "hyar you come home with nothin' in the worl' but little Andy's thirteen cents an' a pair o' hongry ole Plymmy-rocks jus' ter eat mo' cawn."

The Great State of Johnsing, who had been absorbed in trying to rouse a warlike spirit in the chicken hearts around him, now sauntered toward the cabin with his thumbs in his "galluses" and his head on one side. It was a good-sized head, but the rest of him was exceedingly "undergrewed," and did not look more than three feet high. His trousers had been cut very straight and loose, and, going down to his ankles, trailed a little behind his heels, for they had been made with his mother's unfailing prophecy that the Great State was on the point of a rapid growth. The Great State did not know, however, that rapid growth was desirable, for he felt already grown, and since he had become a capitalist he fully realized that he was the head of the house — the only adviser and protector of two large but inexperienced women who, as he had often heard his mother declare, being women, "didn't have no faculty noways."

Neither Mrs. Harold nor Sadie Ophine noticed the small shadow of the Great State as he came softly into the doorway and stood listening to what they said. His mother was

undoing the little bundles of bedquilts and clothing which she had brought back with her, and putting the articles where they belonged. Sadie was frying bacon for dinner, but they were deep in the long-postponed and unsolvable problem of the debt to Eph Wilkinson.

The eyes of the Great State grew larger and larger as he listened, and he ran his hand anxiously into his pocket to make sure that he had not lost his bank. Its sharp iron corners were pressing painfully against his leg, but he did not feel quite safe about it until he had touched it with his hand.

“ ‘Pears like we-uns owes some money to Eph Wilkinson,” he mused, “ an’ maw an’ Sadie’s skeered he’ll do so’tthin’ to us if hit ain’t paid. Queer they don’t speak to *me* bout’n hit. Reckon I’d better go over an’ see what can be did.”

The Great State knew Eph Wilkinson well. It was a long way to the store, but he had often been there with Sadie, for his mother would not go with her, but insisted that she should not go alone. His mother and Sadie seemed to have a prejudice against Wilkinson, and perhaps that was the reason they could not arrange matters with him, but the Great State felt that he knew him as man knows man, and set him down in his

heart as a good fellow. The record was all written out in candy stains. The Great State smacked his lips as he slipped off along the hot, dusty road. His mother had given him a bent pinhook, with permission to go fishing down the branch, and fortunately the branch was out of sight from home. His legs were certainly short, but, pendulum-like, they moved all the faster on that account, and so it was not more than an hour before he reached the store.

The store stood all by itself and lonesome on the country road, and there were neither customers nor loungers in sight when the Great State went in. "Howdy," he said, putting his thumbs into his galluses and looking up at Eph Wilkinson, who was lounging on the counter.

"Howdy," said Eph Wilkinson, putting his thumbs into his galluses and looking down at the Great State. He had such a good face on the whole that a stranger would probably have trusted that record in the Great State's archives.

"Nice day," said the Great State, taking off the hat which his mother had bought for him in Union and mopping his moist red forehead with his sleeve.

Eph Wilkinson noted the new hat with interest. "Well, little Andy," he said, "you

an' yore maw appear to have been prosperin' where you have been."

"Where I been," said little Andy, "they calls me the Great State o' Johnsing."

Eph Wilkinson began to shout with laughter, and jumping off the counter picked little Andy up between his two hands. "Great shakes!" he cried; "what do the Great State o' Johnsing want o' me?"

The Great State struggled a little — as even great States are sometimes obliged to — until he was out of the clutches of the foreign power and firmly upon his own feet, where he could enter upon dignified negotiations. "I jus' drapped in," he said, "to see what you allow to do if my maw don't pay her debt."

Wilkinson stooped and laid a hand on the Great State's shoulder. He noticed that the little fellow was very dusty and tired-looking for so great a State. "Did you come clear over hyar on yore own account to see bout'n that debt?" he asked.

The Great State nodded.

"Well, sonny," Wilkinson said slowly, "I'd like mighty well to favor you, for I reckon when you're bout'n three feet higher there won't be no more debts, but the fact of hit is, I was so wore out waitin' for them ole hens of your maw's to lay enough eggs

to cover the debt that I tole the sheriff to go over thar this evenin' an' levy on the ole hens theirse'ves. Hyar, put a stick o' candy in yore mouth, Andy; them ole hens didn't do much for yore maw noway, 'ceptin' to eat cawn."

The Great State took the candy and his lips stopped quivering. "An' ain't there nothin' I can do bout'n hit," he asked, "now you-uns has done — levied?"

Wilkinson took another stick of candy from the jar and held it out. "No, State o' Johnsing," he said, "I don't see that thar's a blessed thing that you can do. The sheriff'll be there bout'n sundown to catch the hens, an' to-morrer he'll auction 'em off to pay the debt. He went over an' served the attachment on 'em an' counted 'em while yore maw was gone. There ain't nothin' can be did, less'n she's got some friend to buy 'em back."

Wilkinson went on eagerly explaining the legality of the process to the Great State, but the Great State did not seem to comprehend. With a sticky, striped piece of candy in each swinging hand he was marching out of the store. At the door he paused and turned a sticky, striped little face to say, "Thanky, good evenin'," and he was gone.

Wilkinson went to the door and looked after him. When the long trousers and the

galluses and the wisely-poised head were out of sight, he bowed his own head into his hands. "Wisht I hadn't posted the sale o' them ole hens," he groaned, and his voice had something of mental suffering in it beyond the words and more than mere kind-heartedness could explain.

As for the Great State there was not a scrap of either stick of candy left to betray him when he went home to his mother, and even the stripes on his rueful face escaped notice, for the sheriff and a posse had arrived and were waiting for the hens to settle enough to be captured in their various roosting-places. Mrs. Harold sat in the doorway crying, and the Great State went up to her. He was weary to his very thumbs, but he put them manfully in his galluses to comfort her. "Don't you-uns worry, maw, I'll fix 'em," he promised, and then from sheer exhaustion he leaned over into her lap and fell asleep. She put her hand on to his round, nestling head. It was far more of a comfort than his words had been, and all through that evening, after the last protesting chicken had been carried away, and after Sadie Ophine had grown weary of wondering what was going to happen next and had gone away to bed, Mrs. Harold sat crying more and more softly in the darkness, for the mother-love

that was at the bottom of her sorrow rose through it, giving her a foolish mother-feeling of protection in her child.

A sound of footsteps came through the night stillness. She lifted her head sharply. "Who's there?" she asked.

A man walked up to her. "Don't you know me," he asked, "after all these years, Sadie Ophine?"

"I disremember hearin' yore speech," she said stiffly, "an' Sadie Ophine's in the house sleepin'. I'm Mis' An'erson Harol'."

He stood close beside her. "Sadie Ophine," he said, "I ain't never called you Mis' An'erson Harol' in my heart."

A thrill of bitterness came into her voice. "Oh, yore *heart*!" she said; "an' how is hit gettin' erlong these-hyar days?"

"You'd orter know," he said; "I ain't never claimed hit back from you."

She slipped the Great State gently down until his head rested on the doorstep. Then she rose. "Eph Wilkinson," she said, "if I was dead an' buried an' you tromped across my grave I would be lyin' if I said I didn't know. I knowed you onct for love an' I knows you now for hate. Turn yore steps back whar you come from an' leave me an' mine alone."

He did not stir. "Sadie Ophine," he said,

"there was a night onct in Owl Holler when we promised each other on the knees of our hearts never to speak a word o' love to any other soul or let another soul speak love to us. I'd like you to tell me, Sadie Ophine, which one of us has broke that solemn word."

She stretched out her hand. "As God's lookin', Eph Wilkinson," she said fiercely, "I never broke my word to you until you gave it back. What kind of love do you call it to be suspicioning me because I pleased to daince one daince with An'erson Harol'? What kin' o' love was hit that throwed my promise in my face an' tromped off down the Holler jus' becace you seed An'erson a-whisperin' in my ear? I ain't forgot yit the sound yore feet made a-rustlin' through the leaves an' settin' the loose stones to rollin' down the slopes. An' every step you took the love I had fur you turned black, an' I reckon my heart broke then, 'case thar was more hate in hit than hit could hold. I never keered what happened after that. An'erson he married me becace he took a fancy ter; an' he was a good man ter me, — a good, stiddy man, — but I didn't keer. Maybe you think I keered for Sadie Ophine, but I didn't, not as I had ought. She was allus too much like the poor fool girl I uster be. I know I never keered fur fowls, though I

tended 'em faithful 'case An'erson he was so proud of 'em, an' somehow I knowed that I had ought to do the things he liked. But I didn't keer fur An'erson — I cain't recollect keerin' fur anythin' ontill little Andy come." Her voice changed. "Hit's queer," she said, "how I allus liked little Andy. He was jus' like his pappy, but that didn't make no difference except that maybe I liked him better fur hit, hit made me so shore he was goin' ter be stiddy an' kind. An' then somehow, after An'erson died, I got to likin' the fowls too. The fowls an' little Andy, hit was allus right interestin' ter see 'em tergether, one was bout'n as high as t'other an' they was all mighty lively to set an' watch. I couldn't never do much fur 'em noways, fur women don't have no faculty lef' after goin' through such a spell of not keerin', but I liked 'em mighty well." She laughed bitterly. "That's the way hit's been, Eph Wilkinson," she said. "An' you can jedge if I don't hate you a good deal deeper than any fool of a girl ever had the heart to love. You've took the fowls, an' I don't know what you're here fur now onless you're studyin' how ter git little Andy too."

Wilkinson did not answer at once. A whip-poor-will bridged over the silence, calling loudly and persistently, as if determined to

assert its verdict over any case which human souls might have to try. On the doorstep little Andy turned and murmured as weary children will, and once he spoke out quite distinctly, saying, "Thirteen cents!" Behind the cabin the moon was rising, and its light stole up softly in the east.

"Sadie Ophine," Wilkinson said at last, "that poor fool that throwed yore promise back to you growed up to be a man the night that you an' An'erson was married. I allowed you keered for him, but I knowed that I had brung hit on myse'f, an' so I growed to be a man. I didn't forgive you, I cain't say that I ever forgive you, ontill this very night, when they brung them squawkin' fowls o' yourn up to the store, each one a-hollerin' as if hits throat would break. I'd been thinkin' all day bout'n you-uns an' the children, specially little Andy, an' somehow, when the fowls come, the distress of 'em kep' a-raspin' against the old grudge I was a-holdin' ontill all to onct the grudge wa'n't thar, an' I found myse'f trompin' over hyar as if the haints was follerin' me. An' they was, Sadie Ophine; them old days in Owl Holler was every one of 'em a haint that tracked after me an' kep' a-whisperin' things to me in the dark." He went close to her and laid his hand on her shoulder. She did not move

away. "Cain't you forgive me," he begged, "an' let me make up to you fur all these years? My heart has a heap more love fur you than hit had in Owl Holler, becace hit's growed; hit's a man's heart now, stiddy an' true, true an' ready to trust you to the very gate o' death."

The woman stood silent, quivering under his touch. The first moonbeam crossed the cabin roof and reached her face. Wilkinson's hand fell from her thin shoulder. "My God," he said, "how the years has wore you out!"

She looked up into the light. "Yes, look at me," she said. "You done a pretty piece o' work, ain't you! Now jus' make a finish of hit. Thar's little Andy layin' thar on the doorstep, an' if you climb up in the trees an' feel along the limbs you'll maybe find a Banty er a little scrub pullet that the sheriff an' his drove o' men has missed. They looked pretty faithful an' they kep' their little tally in a book, but they've maybe missed seein' one, so you'd better climb up, Eph, an' sarch."

He tried to put his hand on her shoulder again, but she pushed it away. "On the knees o' my heart, Sadie Ophine," he whispered, "I love you more than I ever knowed a man could love, an' I swear to you that I

never knowed how you been a-workin' an' a-sufferin' an' a-growin' old."

She flashed a wild look at him out of eyes no longer dim. "Climb up for yore Banties, Eph!" she cried. "I ain't so old yit but what hit 'ud do me proud to see you takin' the fowls from off my trees with one hand an' makin' love to me with t'other. Thar may be a *few* Banties on the fur branches, so roust yourse'f an' climb."

Turning from him, she stooped to gather the Great State in her arms, but Wilkinson pulled her back. "Don't you know them fowls is yours again," he asked, "whether you want me or not?"

She let the Great State settle down again upon the step. "Eph Wilkinson," she said, straightening herself to face him, "does you-uns think the girl you knowed could ever grow so old an' pore as to be a-takin' gifts from you?"

The Great State had half wakened and the burden on his mind found speech again. "I'll buy 'em back fur you, maw," he murmured; "I worked mighty hard to git hit, but I got thirteen cents."

Wilkinson knelt eagerly beside the boy. "State o' Johnsing," he said, "wake up! Does you want to buy them fowls back for yore maw?"

The Great State raised his head slowly, blinking about him in the shadow of the cabin. "Toby shore I does," he said; "I kin pay you thirteen cents."

"Then they'se yourn!" cried Wilkinson. He rose and faced the woman who stood trembling in the whiteness of the moon. "Now that they'se gone from betwixt us, Sadie Ophine," he pleaded, "cain't you take me back?"

Her hands went up to her face. "Oh, Eph," she sobbed, "I've growed too draggled out an' old!"

"Has you looked at *me*, Sadie Ophine?"

She lifted her face and looked at him. Even in the moonlight he was wrinkled, gray, and old. The tears ran down her hollow cheeks. "May the Lord-a'mighty forgive me," she whispered, and he took her in his arms.

But the Great State of Johnsing had wriggled his iron bank out of his pocket. "Leave my maw alone, the money's in *thar*," he said, thrusting it into Wilkinson's hand. "I airned hit over in Union pullin' strawberries, and if hit don't quite make things square I reckon I kin pay the balance by nex' year. You has to shake the pennies out."

They came slowly, but they came, and Wilkinson gave him back the bank.

AUNT CLEMENTINE'S OLD DAYS

IT was evening, and the family had just finished prayers. There was no one left of the family in these years except the Squire kneeling by the big Bible and Aunt Clementine bowing her turbaned head over a chair near the shadowy doorway. The lamp on the table beside the Squire was flaring a little, and as Aunt Clementine scrambled to her feet she saw it, and trotted across to turn it down.

"When I gits ole," she said abruptly, while the Squire was rising, "I wants you to come in sometimes to little Clementine's, where I'll be sittin' in de chimbley corner; an' I wants you, please, sir, to kneel right down an' pray me dat same prayer. Dere isn't no minister, white or cullud, dat can pray any such a prayer as dat. I'se had it on my min' to ax you evah since I first comed hyar an' you prayed it, jes' like you prayed it evah since."

The Squire took his glasses off and polished them. When they were finished he rubbed his handkerchief across the high

dome of his head. It had never occurred to him before that he prayed in just the same words every night. "Why, certainly, Aunt Clementine, certainly," he assented in a puzzled tone. It was passing through his mind that he might just as well read a prayer from a book, and that was a custom which he had been brought up to abhor. Then his eyes cleared. The great changelessness of our human needs rose before him, justifying the grand and changeless phraseology of his appeal. He did not go far enough to question if it justified the book as well; he was telling himself: "It is not repetition, it is inspiration, always the same inspiration, — if I did not feel it I should be given other words." He reached behind him, tucking his handkerchief into the pocket of his long-tailed coat, and smiling benignantly at Aunt Clementine. "So you expect to live with that niece who has just come North, do you, when you are — er — unable to work any longer?" he said.

He could not have brought himself to say, "when you are old," for Aunt Clementine was already unmistakably old, although her vigor promised to last a long time, he hoped. The Squire depended on Aunt Clementine, and had gradually accustomed himself to all her ways until they seemed the only ways in which a household could find comfort. He

tried not to show how much it troubled him to look forward to the time of her outworn strength, and he would gladly have arranged to have her cared for in the house, but Aunt Clementine had other cherished plans.

She stood across from him with her gnarled hands resting on the table and a look of unusual softness wrinkling the parchment of her face. Even the crusty indrawing of her chin was gone. The Squire had known her a good many years, but it was new to him to see her bespeaking prayers for herself instead of admonishing others.

"Yes, sir, thank you, sir," she answered, bobbing him a curtesy which stopped half way to grace because a rheumatic joint debarred it; "yes, sir, I've allus calculated on spendin' my las' days with little Clementine. You see, de way I allus studied it out, bringing up chillun is jes' like keepin' an insurance policy — dey pays you back in de end; an' so when I los' all of my own I was powahful glad to have my sister give me one o' hern. She was allus such a great, fine, vig'rous child dat it was a rale enjoyment to try to git enough for her to eat an' to watch her bustin' through her clo'es, an' whenever she settled down kin' o' weighty on my min' or my strength I jes' tole myse'f, 'Doan' you shirk out'n you' bes' endeavors for dat chile,

an' when you're old it'll be tuhn about an' she'll be wukkin' for you.' ” The old woman's eyes wandered past the Squire, and her Arab face softened into still more unwonted gentleness. “ You ain't seed my little Clementine yit,” she said; “ such a great, stroppin', fine woman as she has growed to be. An' she allus says the same thing as I does. ‘ Tuhn about is fair play, aunty,’ she says. ‘ You've wukked for me, an' when you'se ole I'se sho'ly goin' to wuk for you.’ You ain't nevah lived in de Souf, Squire, an' you doan' know how ole niggers takes deir ease. An' I'll do de same when I gits ole. I'll jes' live with little Clementine an' sit by her chimbley, with nuffin' in de worl' to do but move de ihons back an' fo'th to keep 'em hot so'st little Clementine won't lose no time, an' between movin' 'em I'se jes' as likely as not to doze off in de chair — my, my, but sometimes when I gits tired I gits to studyin' about it, an' I straitches out my feet, an' I can jes' feel de crinklin' of de heat about my knees! I tell you, Squire, I'se plumb glad I had de sense to put my earnin's into a chile, 'stid of any sort of insurance dat doan' begin to pay you back till aftah you is daid.”

The Squire's eyes wandered about the room seeking all the faces which death and life had taken from him. “ You are right, Aunt Clem-

entine," he said wistfully; "the best of all insurance is some younger person's love. Good night," he added, lifting the lamp as a signal; and the old woman said good night.

The next morning when he came down to breakfast the Squire found Aunt Clementine wearing a white handkerchief tied beneath her turban and around her forehead. He knew that handkerchief well. Sometimes it meant that its wearer had head-ache, and sometimes it was a badge declaring increased rheumatic trouble or general misery, but it always signified that Aunt Clementine was approachable and open to kindly offices. "Head-ache, Aunt Clementine?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," said Aunt Clementine, and as she turned toward him he saw that her eyes had a glaze of pain. "I'se got head-ache an' bones-ache an' feet-ache, an' a sort er triflin' feelin' 'bout de chest. I seems to be a-peterin' out all roun'." The corners of her mouth sank, as if her world felt heavy on her shoulders. "De batter-cakes feels it," she added hopelessly; "dey isn't noways up to de mahk, but you mus' escuse 'em, please, sir, dis mawnin', Squire."

"You're mistaken about them — they're fine," said the Squire, eyeing them cordially; "don't you suppose I know the color of a good cake? But I'll tell you what's the

trouble with you, Aunt Clementine: you're feeling the hot weather; and I'm going to hire the washing done out of the house for a while and let you pick up strength."

Aunt Clementine set down the plate of batter-cakes with a sharp motion. "Does you think I'se gittin' too ole?" she demanded, with a tremor in her voice. Her cramped fingers locked themselves together before her, and she stared down at the Squire with a fierce beseeching in her eyes. "I grumbles an' scolds an' goes a-pokin' 'bout my wuk jes' like I'se sick sometimes," she went on eagerly, "jes' because I'se a ole fool dat was made too much of an' spiled in de raisin' — nevah had to nose right into de pan with de oddah little pickaninnies, like a little drove o' shoats — no, sir; dey thought I was smaht, an' dey made of me, an' I got uster bein' muched an' noticed, so dat I keeps a-wantin' it now dat I is growed. But I ain't ole yit, Squire, an', what's mo', I ain't de sort to hang triflin' roun' in nobody's kitchen aftah my wukkin' days is past. No, sir; I'se jes' goin' to lay by an' take my ease like yaller corn dat's cut an' stacked in de field 'fore it's hauled away an' shucked an' measured out for judgment," — her voice quivered again, — "but, Squire, I'se strong yit; de time for layin' by ain't come."

“Of course it hasn’t,” said the Squire, buttering his batter-cake restively, “but that’s no reason why you should overwork beforehand, when the weather’s hot and the neighbors’ children out of school and running in and out making you trouble all the time. Do you know of anybody you could get who would do the washing something like as well as you do?”

The Squire prided himself as being a man whose every word was upon honor, and he also prided himself upon being able to manage Aunt Clementine, although no one outside of the house could ever have understood how he reconciled these two prides or what became of his conscience — his dutiful, unswerving conscience — when he complimented the old woman so broadly. For to the eyes of the world her work would have shown undoubtable evidence of failing skillfulness and failing sight. But outsiders had not frequented the house in the ten years since Aunt Clementine had entered it, and they could not be expected to know how the Squire had found out and adjusted his mind to the necessary conditions of peace so gradually that he was never conscious of having become an arch flatterer and perverter of the truth.

Aunt Clementine chuckled softly some-

where within herself and forgot the sore question of age. "Little Clementine, she's a heap better washer an' ihoner dan I is," she answered graciously, "an' she'll be mighty proud to git de wuk."

"Capital!" said the Squire. "I wonder I didn't think of it myself. Tell me just where she lives, and I'll take the buggy and drive right over to her with the laundry-bag now."

"No use puttin' you'se'f out," said the old woman. "I'se goin' ovah dere dis evenin' anyhow. De bag ain't much size, an' I wants to tell her jes' how you wants you' shirt-fronts starched."

"Better tell her about it and have her call round for the bag, then," the Squire advised; and he left the table with the genial feeling of having put his household into ways of ease.

And it seemed at first as if he had, for Aunt Clementine went about her work singing like a bird, — some very strange bird, — and toward evening the signal of distress was missing from her forehead and the gray discoloration which with a negro answers for pallor had left her face. But considerably later, when she came back from her visit to little Clementine, she looked worn again, and the Squire reproached himself for not having insisted on delivering the laundry-bag in

person. "There seems to be no way of helping a woman," he mused discontentedly as he watched her hobbling off to her room. "I've noticed it again and again through my life that a woman will always find some way of turning your help into an added burden. I wonder why it is."

Aunt Clementine could have told him that she was acquainted with a woman who knew how to take assistance, but he did not speak to her about it, and as the long weeks of summer filed slowly out from the realms of heat, bringing neither youth nor health to her, in spite of her lessened cares, he began to wonder if it might be that she was a great deal older than she had ever given him to understand. Sometimes he tried to keep his mind from being so occupied with the thought of Aunt Clementine and her sufferings, telling himself that if she did not minister to his material comfort he would probably be thinking less about her, but at other times he realized with a sense of desolation that he was growing almost as old as she, and that if she were to die his daily life would become altogether strange.

One afternoon, reflecting on all these things, he was driving back from a day's absence outside the village. His road lay through a little negro settlement which he

had not been near for years, and he looked about him with humanitarian interest in its progress since the first freedmen had built their cabins in this most southerly shadow of the great wing of the North. The only person whom he saw drew him back from general to individual speculation. It was Aunt Clementine standing outside a hovel, and washing with a furious energy which made the friction of the clothes across the board into a sort of tune. He drove straight toward her. The sound of the wheels did not seem to reach her ears, but as he drew near she turned, without looking up, and went into the house. The form of some one sitting by the doorway disappeared, and as she came out again she glanced his way and he spoke to her.

"Aunt Clementine," he said sternly, "what does this mean?"

"Dis is little Clementine's house," the old woman explained, coming out into the road. As she stood beside him he could see through a veneer of pride and defiance into a broken look which was new to her face. His heart sank while it relented. He felt that she was hiding some trouble from him, and he waited for the clue. "I was feelin' so smaht," she went on, gathering assurance from his changed expression, "dat I comed ovah

hyah right soon dis evenin', an' I foun' dat it was tuhn about sho' 'nough, an' po' little Clementine was a-feelin' too po'ly to wuk. Feelin' smaht like I did, I couldn't sit by an' see her give ovah you' washin' to somebody that would have spiled you' shirts an' starched 'em stiff as pasteboa'd, so I jes' tuhned about an' did it myse'f, an' I doan' feel no wuss for it. I reckon I'se picked up a right smaht of strength."

The Squire shook his head. "You've not been doing right, Aunt Clementine," he answered. "Do you think this is acting fair to me when I'm trying to make you strong and well again?"

"I'se done the best I knowed," said Aunt Clementine, her face taking on a dogged look which, together with its lines of sorrow and of weariness, made it look as old and unconquerable as toil itself. Through what seemed a long and hopeless space of time she met and resisted the kind solicitude of his gaze, and then her defiance fell before it piteously. "You've had chillun, Squire," she said, with a catch in her voice, "an' mebbe you knows how it is to feel 'De chile is my chile,' an' not to git fur 'nough beyond it to see de oddah people in de worl'. I was studyin' mo' about de money for little Clementine dan about you' shirts, an' I reckon " —

"Get in here and ride back home at once," the Squire interrupted brusquely, "and let the shirts" — he would have liked to say "go hang," but, realizing that it would sound unseemly, and that in any case they could not do it without the help of Aunt Clementine, he substituted, "take care of themselves."

The system of "turn about" seemed to have some kind of a hitch in its working, for Aunt Clementine was undoubtedly very "po'ly" after that day, and yet she insisted that her niece was far too ill to be sent for to help her, or, later on, to take care of her when she had taken to her bed. The Squire wandered about the house disconsolately, going up again and again to ask her how she was, and avoiding the kitchen, where he had installed a young and sprightly-motioned black girl, whose swiftness enabled her to make more mistakes in a single day than the Squire had ever dreamed of. Sometimes he had a glimpse of a colored man slinking out of the house, and this he learned to be little Clementine's husband come to exchange reports as to the condition of the two invalids. The new girl in the kitchen told him so with a giggle, and when he asked her how little Clementine was getting on she giggled again and said that *she* thought that

little Clementine was pretty low — “actin’ so, leastways,” she added.

For a long time that night the Squire could not sleep. A suspicion of his own was confirmed by the new girl’s opinion, and the picture of Aunt Clementine sitting by her niece’s fireside floated in many and hopeless variations before his mind. There could be no question now but that Aunt Clementine was approaching the “laying-off time,” but little Clementine did not seem to be preparing any warm nook for her by the chimney-side.

“An ungrateful and idle generation,” he muttered, staring into the darkness with the wide-eyed, impatient wakefulness of a child. He turned again wearily. “There must be some way to get asleep,” he thought. “Mother used to tell me to count sheep jumping over a fence, but I like a stone wall best. One, two, three, four, five” — He held his face toward the rugged, moss-chinked wall which he had summoned before him, and smiled as he noticed how each sheep’s tail and hind feet twinkled in the sun.

In primitive neighborhoods there is a summons which always sounds mournful or portentous when it comes through the darkness, and the last of the Squire’s sheep was

just losing itself in a pasture-land of dreams when he started up in alarm. Some one at his front gate was shouting "Hello-o-o!" in a loud, quavering voice.

Now the Squire, in days when the country was wilder, had often been called in the middle of the night to dispense off-hand justice to disturbers of the peace, but in these later times, when he and the region about him had been growing more grave and dignified, it was an unheard-of matter to be roused like this, and it must mean personal ill tidings or else some public mishap of great importance. All this passed through his mind with the one step between the bed and the window; but, while he was fumbling with a rebellious window-bolt, another voice, full and rich and reverberant, added itself to the distressful calling out-of-doors.

"Squiah Poole! Squiah Poole!" it swelled up through the black shadows of the yard where the starlight did not penetrate, and something in its musical whole-heartedness relieved the tension which the Squire had felt to be absurd, although he could not free it from about his thoughts. The bolt yielded, and he threw open the window and looked out.

"Who's there and what's the matter?" he asked.

"It's jes' me — Isaiah Oldfield," answered the voice of excitement, dropping to a more conversational pitch; "jes' me an' my wife come roun' to ax you to light you' lamp as quick as you can an' write us out some little papahs of divo'cement. Me an' her is boun' to quit, an' we wants de papahs for it jes' as quick as you can write."

"See here," said the Squire, "I can't write you any such papers, and it's nothing to wake a man up at night for in any case."

"Dat's jes' what I done tole him," said the richer voice. "I done says to him, 'Zaiah,' says I, 'de ole Squiah ain't got nobody to quar'l with like we-all has, an' he'll jes' about be takin' his soun'es' sleep.' I says to him, 'He's a right ole man, de ole Squiah is, an' he'd a heap ruther be roused up by daylight an' tend to his divo'cements in de mawnin'.'"

A chill night breeze was blowing through the Squire's scant garments, and the floor near the window was cold. He was uncomfortable enough to resent consideration on account of age. "I wish you to understand," he said, "that night or morning is not the question. A justice of the peace does not have the power of granting divorces. All that you can do, whichever of you is dissatisfied, is to wait and get a lawyer, and

bring your case before the next session of the court."

The Squire had begun to pull down the window, but the man's voice stopped him. "Wait a minute," it besought; "do, please, sah, wait a minute, Squiah, an' study dat 'cision of you'n ovah agin! Sho'ly, sho'ly you ain't a-goin' to sen' me back to wuk an' wuk faw dat big idolatrous woman dat is so powahful idolatrous she axes me to he'p her if she wants to shoo a fly! It's a mighty long time till court sets, faw I done axed about it, an' long befo' den I wants to git a woman what'll cook my suppahs faw me an' my dinnahs an' my breakfas', an' I tell you, Squiah, I done got one all selected dat'll do it, too. You knows her. She's jes' as black as dese shadders, an' when you onct see her wuk you believe it to be de jumpin' of a flea. I tell you, Squiah" —

"Don't you tell me anything of the sort!" cried the old son of the Puritans, bringing his fist down upon the window-ledge. "Take shame to yourself, Isaiah Oldfield, whoever you are, to be harboring such admiration for any other woman than your lawful wife! And you dare not only to think such thoughts, but to speak them aloud for the world to hear, and in the presence of the woman you have promised to love and to cherish" — The

Squire halted, awkwardly uncertain if he was speaking the exact truth, or if there might be some other formula for marriage vows among these negro waifs who kept drifting across the border from the South. The letter of the truth never stood between the Squire and its spirit, yet he was happiest when the spirit was embodied in the letter. A gurgling, care-free laugh from the injured wife filled in the gap.

"Doan' you worry you' old haid tryin' to make him see shame, Squiah," she counselled; "it ain't no sorter use, an' I done give it up long time ago. He doan' mean no harm, Squiah, noways, on'y he ain't got no eddication or fambly; I doan' see how I evah fawgot myse'f so fur's to take up with him in de fust place, an' I tell you what, Squiah, you needn't be backward on my account, faw I'll jes' weah you' image in my heaht if you'll on'y light up you' lamp an' write out dem little papahs."

The Squire gave a sound of disgust that was almost a groan. The sense of humor which would have solaced him by daylight seemed to pertain in some degree to his clothing of the day, and his mind felt bare and irritable without it. "Go away," he cried out; "I tell you I have nothing to do with your little papers of divorcement!"

"I call it a mighty po', no-'count Squiah," the man broke out, "what can't prepare some simple little papahs when a gentleman and his wife has quarrelled an' de two applications is of de same min'!" The Squire let his window run down with a bang, but as he remained beside it he could hear Isaiah Oldfield's disapproval lift itself from scorn to vituperation and rush along its way, leaving a sparkling trail of adjectives behind.

A window above the Squire's flew up, and Aunt Clementine spoke from it in accents like edged weapons, so strong and clear and sharp that the Squire marvelled, having thought her very ill that night. "Isaiah Oldfield!" was all she said.

Isaiah's voice fell into a sort of brisk meekness. "Yes, ma'am," he answered; "isn't you sick no mo'?"

The Squire pricked up his ears. "Well!" he thought, "what next?"

The next was law and order. "You disgraceful, triflin' nigger!" said Aunt Clementine; "you an' you' wife ain't goin' to have no papah of divo'cement, not hyah nor no-wheah else. You'se bofe goin' to shut you' blattin' moufes an' tuhn about faw home, an' you'se bofe of you goin' to wuk decent an' stiddy, like quality, an' min' you' business

an' keep you' hon'able name. Does you onderstand?"

"Yes, ma'am," said Isaiah Oldfield; "but little Clementine she *won't* wuk. I done begged an' imploreded her to stir me up a little corn-pone faw suppah, an' she jes' laid back in de rockin'-chair you give her, an' allowed dat maybe if I was hongry I wouldn't mind stirrin' up some faw bofe of us, or maybe you-all'd be feelin' 'nough bettah to come ovah an' would feel like stirrin' one up."

The woman down in the shadows had been chuckling softly beneath his speech. "Law, yes, aunty!" she said, taking up the tale; "an' I never saw nothin' git so ridic'lously mad as 'Zaiah did when you didn't come. I done tole him, 'Tain't no use cuttin' no didoes like dat, 'Zaiah; you had ought to know dat aunty is gittin' tolable ole, an' aftah her day's wuk is done, even when she ain't sick, she isn't allus honin' to make no sociable calls.' I tole him you'd been gittin' kind o' rheumaticky 'way long back, an' de ole Squiah wukked you pretty hahd" —

"Hesh you' big moufe," said Aunt Clementine. "Doesn't you have any depohtment at all to come hyah hollerin' fambly affairs out in de streets by night? Jes' hesh you' two mofes an' tuhn about faw home." Her voice was so tense that its very decisiveness

suggested that it was near the point of breaking. The Squire noticed it, but he could not see how she leaned out to them through the darkness. "For de Lawd's sake!" she went on, in a hoarse whisper which she hoped he could not hear; "has you forgotten you' promise to me, little Clementine?"

"Law, no, aunty!" little Clementine answered cheerfully. "You has wukked faw me, an' I is goin' to wuk faw you. I doan' nevah fawgit dat, aunty, an' I tries not to weah myse'f out befo' de time. Look like 'Zaiah can't git dat much of gratitude through his low-down haid, but doan' you worry you'se'f, aunty, little Clementine she won't fawgit."

"You'd bettah not," Aunt Clementine retorted with tremulous gruffness. "You'd bettah jes' hesh you' moufe, an' tuhn about for home. I'se comin' ovah dere soon as I gits out to tell you a little of de trufe about you'se'ves, an' I'll bring along dat new green dress o' mine to see if dere isn't 'bout enough of it to cut you out a basque. I cain't use all de dresses I got, noways, an' I was plum mortified at de way you appeahed de las' Sunday I was to chu'ch — you is certainly de mos' triflin', no-'count" — There was a slight pause. No one knew that the old woman's strength was leaving her, and that

she was sinking slowly down upon her knees, for her voice had seemed shaken with anger rather than with weakness. Her bent hands clutched the window-ledge, and a soft cry escaped from her — "Little Clementine!"

The Squire threw open his window and leaned out to look at hers. It was empty, and seemed like a dim black shadow on the wall. Down below he could see the indistinct silhouettes of little Clementine and Isaiah. Something in that cry had frightened them, and they were standing hand in hand. The Squire turned hastily to dress himself. There was a moment more of silence, except that the wind kept whispering under the eaves, and then, out of the darkness, Aunt Clementine's voice went on. She had gathered her will for its control, but it was slow and sorrow-laden. "If you won't come up hyah to me I mus' talk out for dem dat hears to hear," she began, "for, seein' you has come hyah so unseemly, I'se goin' to speak anodder wud to you befo' you goes, an' it may be de las' wud betwixt you an' me. You has given me you' faithful promise to take keer of me when I is old, little Clementine, an' I wants to ax you when you thinks dat time'll come? I been so proud of you, little Clementine, I ain't nevah let a livin' soul speak hahm of you in dese old eahs. An' de way I has

loved you — why, nights when I sits alone I sits studyin' about you, an' right now, when I been layin' hyah sick without de chance to look into you' face, I laughs right out in my mis'ry like a fool, 'cause you' great, stroppin', silly laugh keeps a-soundin' in de stillness of my heaht! I was so proud of you dat I done tole every soul I knowed how you was goin' to take keer of me; an', even when I kep' havin' to send back money to you, it nevah come into my haid — dat it was because you was — triflin' an' no-'count" — at the words which cut her heart most deeply her voice broke and ceased.

The Squire stood shivering beside his window before he spoke. Then he called down rather gently, and told little Clementine to come into the house. He met her at the door with a light, and went with her up the stairs. The lively young black girl was sleeping undisturbed on her pallet in the corner. Aunt Clementine lay on the floor by the window, shaking with long-drawn, inarticulate gasps. "Little Clementine has come to put you to bed and to take care of you," the Squire began, but then he paused.

Great tears were running down the younger woman's face. She stooped and lifted her aunt in the strong arms which had refused so many burdens. "I allus tole you — aunty,"

she said brokenly, "dat I was goin' to take keer of you when you was ole."

"Hush," the Squire said; "you are too late! Aunt Clementine's old days have come and gone."

THE LAW AND THE LONG BONE

THERE used to be an annual barbecue in Angel's Grove at North Pass, and if it has been discontinued something must have happened to Wiley Sides.

A great many people would have liked to have something happen to Wiley, for in the old days the long forest roads about the Pass would scarcely have known themselves without his shrieking whoop and the firing of his pistol as he took his gyratory homeward course. His voice had a peculiar quality and went straight to the nerves of the lonely women in the isolated roadside houses, and made them more deadly afraid of Wiley Sides than of any other young ruffian who ranged the country.

Wiley was an outlaw by right and by mode of life, the only reason that he was not an outlaw in fact being that he was so much more the law than the law itself ever dared to be that if they had not learned to live in tolerance together it would have been the law and not Wiley that went out. Yet Wiley was not more wholly bad than any other

healthy young animal, and when he was a friend to you he was a friend with any weapon that came to hand.

It was a habit of Wiley's to pass many a happy night lying at the side of the road in a comfortable state of complete or semi-unconsciousness, with only the trustful spirit within him and the weird shadows which the moon threw over him to protect him from the chill air and the dew. But one night, being overcome probably by weariness, he made a hasty selection of the very middle of the road as a lodging-place, and as he lay there resting peacefully, and neither hearing nor fearing anything, there came a rattle of wheels and a beating of hoofs, a fusillade of pistol-shots, and a chorus of such demoniac howling as only Wiley himself could have excelled, and Wiley was abruptly disturbed by the crushing of horses' hoofs followed by wagon-wheels across him. Hoof-beats, rattling of wheels, shouting and shooting rushed on into silence, and Wiley was alone again.

"The boys," he muttered, as pain roused him to a really clear and vivid understanding — "boys — wanted me — to stay an' — ride with 'em — an' I wisht — I had. Lordy, Lord-a'mighty, but I wisht I had!" He tried to turn and ease himself, but burst into uproarious swearing and sank back. He

hushed to listen for a sound along the road, and as there was none threw all his torture into long and awful yells. But fate had overtaken him in the very loneliest hollow in the road. The rank miasma of the night breathed over him; a hoot-owl tried to reassure him from a distant tree; and that was all. The moon, hearing even more disturbance than was usual, came peering above the treetops, smiled on the writhing misery at the bottom of the road, passed by to the other side, and sank again behind the trees. There were more hours in that night than in all of Wiley's previous life.

Toward morning, when every form of oath had lost its freshness for him, his objurgation mixed itself with entreaty; but the stars blinked down unmoved by threat or prayer, and finally shrank away altogether, as a band of gray clearness broadened up the sky. In an interval of silence Wiley caught a jiggling creakaty-creak of approaching wheels.

"Help! Help! O Lord-a'mighty, help!" he yelled.

"Git up, Pomp, git along dah!" a voice exhorted in answer, and the sound of a stick belaboring thinly covered bones came to Wiley's ear like music. "Cain't yo' see dis-yeah road too slim to tuhn in? What yo' standin' still faw like dat? Git 'long dah,

yo' ole fool hoss! I'se sprized at yo' dumbness — dat ain't no unsanctioned sinnah swearin', dat somebody wrastlin' wid de powah o' Gawd! Git up! Git up! Has I raised yo' a Christian to see yo' skeered of a pusson at prayer?"

Slowly Pomp's thin Roman nose came into Wiley's range of vision, stretching above him disapprovingly, and then a grizzled negro head came between them. "Is dat yo', Mr. Wiley, sah?" a compassionate voice asked. "Why, Mr. Wiley, sah, yo' is bad hu't, an' I 'spec' yo' bettah let ole Darby take yo' home!"

"You're a mighty white nig" — Wiley began, but his voice oozed away from him in weakness. "Lift me keerful," he choked, "er some of the pieces'll come apart."

There must really have been something of the power of God lingering along that forsaken roadway, for little lame old Darby hoisted Wiley's gigantic frame into his wagon, the spidery wheels of the wagon stood up under the unusual weight, and Pomp's antique skeleton managed to convey the whole load home. More than this, Darby, with the help of the village doctor, took tenderest care of Wiley, who had neither kith nor kin to claim him, and performed such miracles of surgery and nursing that in the course of time Wiley

was abroad again, apparently none the worse for having had a startling percentage of his bones cracked and broken and pushed out of place by the energy of passing friendship.

Wiley's reappearance in public was at the annual barbecue which the negroes held on the fourth of August, in Angel's Grove. It should have been on the first of August, as it celebrated the freeing of slaves in Jamaica, but the date had been moved forward to the fourth to satisfy the negro love of conformity by emulating the Fourth of July. White people had not been planned for originally in this festival, but they came out of curiosity, and the poor whites, relishing the barbaric smoky abundance of the barbecued meats, soon poured in and made the holiday their own. The negroes, nothing loath, came to be more caterers than feasters, for West Indian Emancipation was lost sight of in financial success. So it was into a mixed gathering of tawdry whites and gorgeous blacks that Wiley sauntered nonchalantly, his torn hat making a halo for his long, broad face, a sleepy look in his dull blue eyes. He had been missed, but few people knew where he had vanished, for he often wandered away from the Pass for weeks, and when he was gone there was always a feeling that it would be unwise to search for him. His coming was

soon enough for questions, and, little as his absence was regretted, he was sure to be hailed with warmth.

"Wiley Sides is back! Hullo, Wiley! What run off with you, Wiley?" his old companions shouted, rallying round him. "Been off visiting your friends? Just in time for sport! What you been up to so long?"

"Been visitin'," said Wiley, "an' gettin' glued together. Woke up one night an' found I'd broke in a lot o' pieces, an' now I'm a-lookin' for the fellers what broke me."

There was a slight recession of the crowd, and expressions of interest as to who could have been so careless and unfortunate.

"I know, an' that's enough," Wiley answered sententiously. "I don't lay out to trifle with 'em jus' to-day. My arms ain't limber enough jus' yet."

He stretched out the great, brawny members, and the crowd gathered closer to examine their disabled condition with a pleasant sense of freedom. "Stiff," explained Wiley. "Bones hitched together too firm in j'inin'. Doc' says there'll be a heap o' daylight burned before they get plumb lively."

"Ain't you got no use of 'em, Wiley?" somebody asked, trying not too gently to flex one. First that which had been touched

and then the other swung out in huge circles to the right, left, above, below. "No use of 'em at all!" roared Wiley, mowing the people down about him. "Stiffened in the j'int's! No use of 'em at all! No use of 'em at all!" He swung them round his head like battle-axes in the cleared space about him, and burst guffawing through the crowd.

"Gimme some meat!" he shouted as he reached the plank tables where the negroes were carving.

They served him speedily, and negroes and white people gathered in admiring wonder while he appeased his convalescent hunger by lowering great dripping slices into his mouth, first from the ox, then from the sheep, then from the pig, and then again from the ox. It began to seem as if the rest of the world must hurry, or postpone its appetite until another year. Even the ice-cream stands, the fruit-stalls, and the "Flying Dutchman" lost something of their patronage as it was murmured about that Wiley was trying to eat the ox.

"Excuse me, Mr. Wiley, sah," said old Darby, the head of the barbecue, hobbling boldly up and touching Wiley on the arm, "excuse me, but we's expectin' a delegation from Alto, sah, an' we'd like a little

lef' if dey should happen to be hongry. So I 'spec', Mr. Wiley, sah, dat it 'bout time yo' lef' de meat, sah, an' begun, sah, on de bone."

"Bones?" shouted Wiley, in the appreciative tone of one who had come to respect them, "bones? Bones is just what I need. If I'd been eatin' more of 'em I wouldn't ha' broke so fine. Here, you nigger, cut me out the bigges' bone in the ox an' I'm hongry enough to crunch it."

"Dis-yeah bone de longes', sah," said the grinning carver; "does you feel like tacklin' de longes' bone?"

Wiley sized up its possibilities. It looked sufficient to improve the tone of his whole anatomy. "Cut her out," he roared, making a windmill again of his arms and fanning the carver with their rotation. "Le's see how quick you can cut her out; an' leave plenty o' meat on her, understand?"

Poor old Darby felt a lingering responsibility for Wiley. Wiley was no inconsiderable weight for a small, deprecating person to carry about either mentally or physically, and Darby teetered from his long leg to his short one in distress. He knew that Wiley would have no money left for other things if he bought so much meat. He was sure he ought to interfere, and yet, although his

protégé seemed in a gentle and yielding humor, he did not like to count too far upon a debt of gratitude. "Mr. Wiley, sah," he finally whispered, "isn' yo' skeered faw yo' health, sah, if yo' eats so much? Dem-ayah bones of yo' own hasn' growed so powahful firm faw yo' to ax 'em to tote round mos' a whole ox beside yo'se'f, an' den yo' pockets, Mr. Wiley, sah, dey isn' so very exuberant in money, sah."

Wiley brushed the old man aside as he might have brushed a fly for which he chanced to have a kindly regard. "What I needs jes' now," he explained to his mentor, "is a little solid eatin'; reckon I understand gettin' the mos' for my money;" and drawing on the exchequer of his pockets to the full extent of his credit he laid the result upon the table and remarked that he was ready for the bone. It was handed to him, and he set out upon a round of the other attractions, gnawing it when he was not shaking it above the heads of the people and inducing them to treat him to everything else there was for sale. Merely to see the bone at rest gave no idea of its persuasive eloquence in motion or of the generous impulses it could inspire. Wiley's tall form towered above the undergrowth of people, and his big voice dominated the grove, shouting genially, "Le's

have some ice-cream! Le's have some peaches! Le's have a pie!" while in the distance old Darby snickered with appreciation, recognizing the immense secondary purchasing power of the bone.

Like all things sublunary, however, Wiley's appetite had its boundaries, and as he slowly approached them a voice from the "Flying Dutchman" attracted him, calling out, "This way, ladies and gentlemen! Here's the place to get your money back! Five cents a ride, ladies and gentlemen! Right this way!"

Rotary motion produced in any way had always been attractive to Wiley. "Well," he said, "I'm not hongry no more, so what I shorely want is to get my money back," and he bestrode a tiny horse, much to the agitation of a small boy who was riding its companion and seemed likely to be pushed off by Wiley's breath.

"Five cents, sir," said the manager, "five cents."

"All right," said Wiley, battering one of the horse's fragile legs with the bone, "you can pay me when I get off, on'y don't keep me waitin' for my ride. Here we go!"

The whacking of the bone was a signal, and away they went, not once but many times, for Wiley saw no reason to get off when the others did. He declared that he

had spent more than five cents, and he might as well make a good job and get it all back at once. He didn't mind how long it took. Relay after relay of children and young people filled the other seats, but Wiley sat calmy on his pigmy steed, his legs dragging and his big face shining serenely on the breathless babies and giggling lovers who made up the circle.

In the middle of his tenth round some one came running past with the cry, "Constable's arrested old Darby! Constable's come on the ground and arrested old Darby!"

Wiley straightened himself in consternation. "Stop!" he shouted to the owner of the Dutchman, and very willingly the Dutchman stopped to let him off.

"'Rested old Darby!" he muttered, as he strode across the grove. "I reckon somebody else will break in pieces if they don't let him loose," and the crowd which had gathered before him concluded that it had gathered in the wrong place when it saw the approaching bone.

"Drop him!" said Wiley, and the constable, who was playfully swinging old Darby to and fro by the waistband, felt something strike first under one arm, then under the other, and Darby dodged out of his hands as a chestnut pops out of the fire. Wiley

reached out and patted his shoulder as he stood bobbing his head in gratitude. "You needn't be skeered of the constable," he said, "I ain't."

The constable gathered himself and glowered. When Wiley interfered in a question it became very intricate. "Put down your weepson, sir!" he cried at last; "how do you dast to try to stop the execution of the law?"

Wiley offered a short inverted prayer against the law, loudly and distinctly that all might hear. There was a moment in which the leaves rustled overhead. "What you tryin' to stop this yere Darbecue for?" Wiley added.

A very angry man stepped out from behind the constable. There was a look about him that seldom confronted Wiley Sides. "These-yere niggers is a gettin' too sassy," he cried, "an' you'd ought to be ashamed to be a-takin' up for 'em! It's time this barbe-cue was broke up. They run it on white men's money, sellin' stuff to white men, an' they won't let a white man sell a durned thing on the grounds."

"Did yo' want so bad to sell along of niggers, sah?" asked Darby from the shelter of Wiley's power.

"The old fellow's right," declared a pros-

perous-looking white man. "You're lowering yourself, William Tait, to want to sell on their grounds and then to get old Darby arrested out of spite. What if he doesn't have a license to sell? The village has never made a point of it before, and this is pure spite. You're lowering yourself this way."

"Cain't lowah hisse'f," gurgled a negro woman's voice.

"I didn't want to sell nothin'," the angry man retorted, "but old Darby don't have any license to sell, an' this sort of thing's got to be stopped — runnin' things on white folks' money an' despisin' white folks' law."

Again Wiley offered the terse inverted prayer. All the people in the grove were struggling forward to get a sight of him as he stood with his long bone uplifted, waiting for the next word from the constable or William Tait. There was jostling and murmuring and a well-resisted effort to put the women and the children to the outskirts of the crowd; but the few well-dressed people were already sifting out from the rest, as there seemed no chance of compromise, although the feeling was strongly against the enforcement of the law.

"If you're going to arrest him why don't you do it?" a sneering voice called out.

The constable's eyes narrowed with rage.

"Boys," he shouted, looking around him from the shadow of the half-gnawed femur, "are you goin' to stand still and see the law over-rid by a cussed fool with a bone? Old Darby has refused William Tait permission to raise his tintype tent on these grounds! Come along an' back me up! He's sellin' without a license within the town limits! Come along an' back me up whilst I seize him an' take him before the squire!"

"Why didn't you 'rest him last year?" taunted another voice.

The negroes had been keeping a prudent silence, rolling their eyes in suspense, but they took up this query, feeling themselves growing in favor. "Yah!" they chuckled at the constable; "why didn' yo' 'res' him las' yeah? What make yo' fo'git so long?"

It was unwise for them to exult so soon, and many a wavering white man went into the balance with William Tait. There was a trampling forward and a more distinct ranging into sides, while the ejected women clambered on to the unguarded tables, dragging their babies after them that no one might miss the fun. But still the bone swayed silently, and concerted action beneath it still hung fire.

The constable made a dart to one side of Wiley, but Darby hopped to the other side,

and he found himself barred out by the bone. He wheeled in the opposite direction; Darby, with the spryness of youth in his unequal legs, jumped around Wiley again as if playing tag, and the bone swung over and dropped once more in the constable's path. There was a burst of laughter. The constable wheeled; Darby jumped. The constable jumped; Darby dodged. They were like parts of a mechanical toy regulated by the swinging bone. Wiley himself began to grin, and the negroes jumped mockingly to and fro.

The constable made a sudden movement. "Stand aside!" he shouted, pulling a revolver from his pocket; but before he could aim it it went whizzing into the tree-tops, shooting recklessly at the agitated leaves. There was a scuttling apart to make room for it as it fell, and a negro picked it from the ground, and there was a bubbling up of broken negro merriment.

"Oh, you can laugh!" screamed William Tait, and, leaping, he tore a branch from a tree and rushed in with it against Wiley. "Seize him! Seize him!" he shouted. "He's defyin' the law! Knock the bone out of his hand; he's drawed it on the law! Seize him! Seize him! Crack his bone for him! Knock out" —

The bone came crashing through the attacking branch. "No, you don't!" shouted Wiley, stretching Tait upon the ground. "I've had a lot o' bones cracked for me, but you don't crack this! Get out! Get out! Get out o' this grove! March! March! You're disturbin' the peace! The peace cain't be disturbed! Get out! Get out! March!"

His great, loosened voice shook the very trees, but the men were roused at last, and cracking off branches they beset him on every side. The negroes armed themselves and closed in behind him. There was shouting and howling and snapping of twigs and crashing of blows, but above all other sounds rose Wiley's yell, and above all other weapons swung the bone, laying man after man upon the earth where Wiley had so often rested well.

"Arrest a pore old darkey for nothin', will you? Break up this Darbecue, will you? Get up off the ground an' march! March! March! Don't slip out to the sides! March! March! Hay-foot! straw-foot! Break up the Darbecue, will you? March!"

He drove them before him, weaving about from right to left to warn the stragglers in, while the negroes trailed behind him echoing his shouts, and women and children of all

colors ran hither and thither screaming as they brought up the rear. Resistance broke into rout, swept forward by the bone, and the whole mass surged forward to the gates.

The negroes began shouting gleefully, "We've tuhned 'em out! We've tuhned 'em out!" — and they dashed ahead to shut the gates as the bone flourished over the empty road.

"Not much you don't!" Wiley shouted. "I'm not done yet! Get out yoreselves! Get out yoreselves! I'm not sidin' with niggers! Get out every one of you but Darby! He's the on'y white man I know; me an' him'll run this Darbecue! Get out! Get out! March! Hay-foot! straw-foot! Watch the nigger recruits! Me an' Darby'll run this Darbecue! Good-by!" — and he slammed the gates behind the last crest-fallen negro that ducked under the waving bone.

"But, Mr. Wiley, sah!" stammered old Darby as Wiley rested the head of the bone on the ground and leaned upon it, roaring with delight, "you an' me'll have it powahful peaceable an' ordahly heah, sah, but you an' me an' de ladies cain't possibly disintegrate all de ice-cream in the freezahs, sah, not mentionin' de meat dat yo' didn' eat, sah, an' I'm skeered de ladies doesn' have dey

pocket-books in dey pockets, sah, an' it seem like we goin' to have a little mo' peace dan we need an' not quite 'nough profit, Mr. Wiley, sah, widout de men."

Wiley stopped laughing and looked about him blankly. "Well, I never studied about that," he admitted, and opening the gates he climbed on to one of the gate-posts and addressed the citizens once more.

"Any of you that feels whiter than you did," he shouted, "an' that wants to come back, an' to mind his own business, an' not to mind other folks's, an' to pay for what he eats, an' not to disturb the peace from now on to everlastin', is annually welcome to this yere Darbecue in Angel's Grove."

The multitude straggled smilingly back until only the two defenders of the law were left outside the gates, and the barbecue ended in peaceful prosperity under the shadow and protection of the bone.

SIX BRAVE SOLDIERS

OSCAR DILLOW had fainted on the battlefield without a wound, and as a consequence the wounds came afterward when he was laid up with nervous fever, while the other men lay around him on the hay and passed the time in thrusting at his pride. Sometimes it seemed as if he had none, and then they prodded deeper, hoping they might reach it somewhere out of sight. One day a little fellow named Parmlee struck it, and the prostrate giant staggered to his feet.

It was a burning day. The sunlight came through chinks and knot-holes, and fell in shafts of torture on the wounded men. Horseflies, the only original properties left in Ferguson's barn, pervaded it officiously. Outside, on the hill beyond Ferguson's fields, the shells were screaming. Dillow had dropped into one of those fitful dozes into which his over-wrought nerves relaxed between the outbursts on the hill when little Parmlee came and stood beside him. Parmlee had been to the kitchen tent of the Sanitary

Commission, and had brought back enough oyster stew for each man in the barn, and each man had had his share excepting Dillow. Now Parmlee was waiting beside him, with a dipperful of it in his hand, but a contemptuous smile upon his face.

"Six oysters — for a coward," he thought as he shifted his lame leg discontentedly and waited.

It seemed to him against all the laws of war. He himself had had a deep flesh-wound just above the knee, and Dillow had turned gray in the face at the sight of it and had fallen over him, nearly shattering all his bones and holding him in torment. And here was Dillow, still lying almost as gray and inert as he had lain upon the field. Parmlee thanked all his stars for not having been obliged to lie underneath the big fellow all this time; and yet his injured leg almost refused to carry oysters to Dillow, although it was ready enough in lending itself to the other men who were on their backs. They were brave soldiers. It aggravated the limp to have to wait upon a coward.

As Dillow kept on dozing, the one thing the little attendant wanted to do was to spill the stew into his face and wake him; but some impulse caused him to look across to the next bundle of hay and meet a pair of

hungry eyes that were gazing up from it. Beneath the eyes there yawned a grinning, hungry mouth, and a humorous hungry finger pointed into it. Eyes, mouth, and finger all belonged to a man who had fought well. He had had one dipperful of oysters, but yearned for more. Little Parmlee hesitated a moment, thought of the instructions given him at the tent, and then, grinning in answer, tiptoed round the gigantic sleeper and fed an oyster into the open mouth, which closed upon it as tightly and far more ecstatically than the shell in which it had once lived.

Parmlee had only meant to rob the coward of one oyster, but as soon as that was gone, and he glanced about again, he saw four other gaping mouths quite near at hand. He went from one to another like a parent bird, and as he dropped the longed-for morsel into each it closed upon it with an expression of great bliss. There was but one oyster in the plate now, and it looked so lonely and so tempting as it circled through the broth that before he really knew he had swallowed it himself. Then he winked silently at the five brave soldiers, and they winked at him.

The broth might possibly have gone spoonful by spoonful after the oysters if

Dillow had not wakened and seen the dipper. His listless eyes found interest.

"Hello, Parmlee," he said, lifting himself a little, and sniffing expectantly, "are you bringing me some oyster stew?"

"Yes," said Parmlee, and he held the dipper for the giant's big, unsteady hands. He did not notice what young hands they were. Parmlee was only eighteen, and too young himself to notice such things, or to make allowances, and he never guessed that Dillow was as young as he; but then, no one had ever made allowances for Dillow. It is not customary to make allowances for giants.

Dillow took the dish and searched it with his eyes, and finally looked up as one does who hears some news too sad to credit.

"Oyster stew without any oysters?" he asked.

"They give the oysters to wounded men," said the smaller boy in a grim voice. "They think you're too much like an oyster a'ready — just as active an' fiery as an oyster, an' the same strength an' muscle to your size."

He laughed, and the five men near by joined with him like a chorus, and then licked their lips, where a pleasant little memory still lingered.

Oscar Dillow looked from one to another of them, and understood. A spasmodic jerking took possession of his hands, so that he could not lift the spoon. Parmlee held the dipper up impatiently, and he swallowed the broth at a single gulp, and gave the tin so sudden a push that it flew out of Parmlee's hands. The little fellow looked after it in surprise, while Dillow struggled to a sitting posture and glared at the men.

"Oh, you — you — *you!*" he began, groping wildly after invective and self-justification and prophecy, but the whole wreck that he had made of his manhood, and the whole insult to it, rose in him, struggling together and strangling him, until his voice broke out into a cry, and he fell back upon his bed and snatched the sheet over his face to hide it.

The men looked from one to another, and laughed aloud. They felt a little sheepish, but they were more certain than ever that the oysters had been well placed.

"What he needs now is his shell to crawl into," one said.

"Don't worry," came another humorous growl. "He'll just drop into the water up Salt river and grow himself another shell."

"Plenty o' shells right here, ready an' callin' for him," chuckled still another voice,

as a spitting, screaming missile went over the barn.

Parmlee stooped and lifted the sheet for a final peep at the coward who lay shuddering from the sound of the shell as the live flesh shudders from the knife.

"Hush, boys," he said, replacing the sheet, and turning to hobble cheerily out as he had come. "He's about to get a little rest. Sh-h-h-h-h! Oysters is so active that they need a little relaxation now an' then."

As Dillow lay there, trying to shut his ears to the comments that passed above him, the horror of the battle on the hill seemed suddenly a trifling thing compared to the horror of his life. He threw back the sheet and sat up. The man who had eaten the first oyster rose to his elbow, too, and looked at the big boy who had had nothing left but broth.

"Gettin' hungry again?" he asked.

"No," said Dillow, passing his hand across his dizzy head. "I'm gettin' up to wait until you're well enough for me to lick."

He rose to his feet and staggered against the wall, white and quivering. There was a small window over one of the mangers, and he looked out on fields full of confusion, where the army had swept forward to battle, leaving last week's wounded in Ferguson's

barn like a drift-mark on the beach. But now, from under the cloud on the hill, a wave of men in blue were falling back and breaking like water round a rock wherever a pursuing shell exploded in their midst. Here and there an officer galloped about, beating back the men and being overborne, and in the nearer fields the ambulances and army wagons tore back and forth like a distracted flock, sometimes colliding with one another, sometimes passing over a trampled swath of fallen men. Dillow clenched his hands and looked on with his lips shut tight. The men behind him on the hay questioned him eagerly, but he did not hear. At last he turned to them.

"Boys," he said, and there was a sob in his throat that gave weight to the fever-thinned voice, "boys, I'm going to lick you, but while I wait for you to get strong enough I'm goin' out there."

They stared at him.

"What'll you do there?" questioned three voices at once. "You'd be mighty useful as a breastwork, if they was fortifyin', but if they're rampagin' back here through the field" —

"I'll fight," said Dillow. "The boys are falling back. They're needing fighting men."

“An’ the oyster riz in his might, an’ sez he, ‘I’ll fight, I’ll fight!’” sang the first brave soldier, but the coward made no retort.

He crept to the place where clothes were hanging in the place of vanished harnesses, and, propping himself against a stall, began to dress. His head swam, his heart fluttered, his hands shook the garments, and the men looked on with interest and unbelief, throwing in suggestions and offering their own wardrobes, — not being fighting men. When he was half dressed Dillow sat down on his pile of hay, too spent to finish. A warning “Sh-h-h-h!” passed from lip to lip, followed by a laugh, for they all thought that he was giving up; but one of the five explained in his defence:

“You don’t understand, you fellows. He’s ready and waitin’. He’s goin’ to fight on the half shell!”

A light pattering of spent bullets came down on the roof, and silence fell with them. It was as if the little rattle had been a death summons to each man. Finally they looked at one another.

“We had ought to be moved,” some one said soberly. “Wonder where Parmlee’s gone to. He had ought to tell somebody to move us.”

“H’m,” said other voices, “Parmlee’s too

busy movin' fellows at the front — ain't nobody to look out for us."

Dillow sat on his pile of hay, and clinched his hands between his knees. The din and turmoil grew about them as the firing came in hot and close across the fields. The angry crackling of musketry was shaken by long, deep-mouthed baying from the guns, and shells screamed oftener about them.

"My God!" said one.

Dillow looked up slowly and wonderingly at their terrified faces. It made very little difference to him to be waiting for death here, or to be waiting for it at the front, in action; there was nothing in him to take fire and carry him beyond the thought of danger. Knowing that these men had that which he lacked, it seemed even more pitiful to see them all afraid. He felt that if he had gone out he might have prevented it, that out of the sheer strength of his pity he might have led the forces aside so that the firing should not fall so close to the wounded in the barn. He could see his own ghost dash out through the shot and the shell and bid the commanders beat their forces to one side, and he followed the apparition with a breathless reverence until he remembered that he himself was still sitting with clinched hands upon the hay.

He jumped to his feet with an oath and started toward the door, and fell. A bomb had struck the barn. Its explosion rent the air and filled it with dust and shivered wood. For a moment Dillow thought that he himself and all the rest were dead. Then he found that he could rise and look about. One side of the barn was gone, and the hay and dry wood were bursting out in fire. The stronger men were running and creeping and writhing from their beds, but there were some too weak to move, and some pinned down by timbers, and these cried hoarsely after those who could escape. Overhead the flames had sprung into the loft; the stalls about the men were travelled by little tongues of fire that brought the rats running and squealing out of harm.

Dillow bent and gathered up one of the helpless men, and took him out, passing the laboring, groaning ones who helped themselves. Then he ran back into the fire for the next. His knees rocked and his breath was thick with smoke. The cinders fell crackling over him; the loft sagged lower and lower toward his head. "Five!" he kept insisting to himself. "There are five who can't move;" and he lifted another piteous form and dragged it out into the grass.

It seemed to take him years to go and

come; the flames ate swiftly through the parched barn timbers, and the roar was like the thunder of cannon in his ears. Three times again he stumbled back into the thick of it; three times he came out staggering, his great weak body bending double, his gaunt, blackened, and bleeding arms wrapped about a nerveless form, the clothes burned off his back, the hair burned on his head, the blood making red furrows down his black, distorted face. A falling beam had struck him, but he did not know.

"Five," he was breathing in his short, thick breaths, "five fightin' men."

He started once more, and his seared flesh burned the hand that held him back.

"Lemme go!" he cried, turning fiercely on the surgeon who was holding him. "I got to get 'em — they're fightin' men!"

"You've got 'em, you idiot!" screamed the surgeon, holding fast. "You've got 'em all but the big coward, and the devil himself couldn't pull him out of there."

Little Parmlee came hobbling up among the witnesses. "That's him! That's him!" he cried, but Dillow wrenched himself free. He had been crouching double, as if he still carried a weight, but now his eyes fell on the five brave soldiers lying smoke-stunned on the grass, and he knew that his task was done.

“ All — but — the — coward,” he muttered in a voice that came like the wind through yellow corn.

A ripple of life straightened him. He stood up sheer and black against the tower of flame that rose into the heavens, flinging out its long bright banners to the sun. The exultation flickered out, he swayed a moment, and then little Parmlee and the surgeon caught him in their arms and laid him down.

The surgeon looked up at the expectant faces.

“ He’s gone,” he said simply. “ That was a brave soldier.”

The men who had hats uncovered their heads in silence. Far off the regiment was surging like a wave against the hill. The tide had turned.

MR. WILLIE'S WEDDING-VEIL

THE main street of Pontomoc lay quiet and shadowy beneath its live-oaks. The blinds of the houses were closed, and even the dogs on the doorsteps drowsed away the sultry afternoon. Between the trees, where the patches of sunlight fell, the moisture from a morning shower still shimmered in the air, and little swarms of gnats and mosquitoes hovered in the brightness. It was one of those rainy summers when the southeast winds bring showers from the Gulf and mosquitoes from the marshes all in the same breath, and the mercury in the thermometers is too languid to creep down from the top of the tube at night, knowing well that the sun will call it back again in the morning.

No one had come into the little village store for hours, and George Dabney, the clerk, had tilted back against the counter and was dozing under a cloud of tobacco smoke, rousing himself once in a while to relight his cigar and to wish that he could keep it going better while he slept.

"George!" a woman's voice called from

the street. "Come out here at once, George!"

He sprang to his feet, laid his cigar down on the counter, and went blinking to the door. A carriage stood in front, and a well-dressed middle-aged woman was leaning out of it, fanning the mosquitoes from around her face. Her old horse had dropped his head and stood patient and dejected, only giving a great shiver now and then, and switching his thin old tail.

"Something I can do for you-all, Mrs. Grayson?" George asked, getting hold of his clerkly smile, for in Pontomoc it is not the custom for ladies to come inside the store on any small errand. George Dabney takes what they want out to their carriages, and they examine it over the wheels.

"I thought you were asleep or dead," she answered sharply. "I should have gotten out in a minute to see what was the matter. I've just been down to the express office after Miss Juanita's wedding-veil, and I find it has missed the train, so I want you to bring me out the finest and best one in the store."

George's face fell under a deprecating gloom. "I'm mighty sorry, but I don't have a wedding-veil in stock," he said.

"But you must have one, George," Mrs.

Grayson insisted, as if proper firmness might create so slight a tissue as a veil. "The creoles, you know," she added, in a more conciliatory tone, "they'll not be married without one, and so you have to keep a supply on their account."

"That's just the trouble," the clerk explained. "I never saw such a summer for creoles to get married. There's been a regular run on the store for veils, and the last one was taken yesterday. Mr. Willie de Ferriere sent for it from out on the Point."

"Mr. Willie sent for your last wedding-veil?" Mrs. Grayson repeated incredulously. It seemed to her that George was giving a lame excuse for not having any, and she was still half inclined to require him to bring one out at once.

George smiled again, and fanned away the mosquitoes with an airier grace. "I guess you've forgotten that he's down with two broken ribs and a collar-bone from that run-away last week," he said. "I thought he was out of his mind at first, but old Ann said the veil was to keep the mosquitoes off his face and hands. You know how these mosquitoes are — so little that they go right through ordinary bars, and he's too weak to fight. I reckon you'll have to send over to Potosi for a veil."

"But didn't I tell you that the wedding is to-night?" Mrs. Grayson cried; "and Miss Juanita has taken the creole notion in her head, and she declares she'll not be married without a veil." She gathered up the reins and gave them a jerk as a hint to the horse that it was time to go. Then she gave another jerk to advise him that she was not quite ready after all. "Was it one of your best veils Mr. Willie bought?" she asked.

"The finest one we ever had in the store, Mrs. Grayson," George declared.

"H—m," she said thoughtfully, "I'll see about it," and giving a third jerk to the reins she drove away. George stood and looked after her until he saw her turning down the road to the Point. Then he went back into the store, and when he picked up his cigar to relight it his lips had yielded to an unofficial smile.

Willie de Ferriere was lying very restless and very miserable beneath the wedding-veil. The mosquitoes did not get under it, but neither did the breeze. In point of fact there was no breeze, but Mr. Willie did not know that, and he laid the whole sultriness to the veil. He was tired and sick and lonely. On the whole it was a relief to him when old Ann put her head in at the door to say that Mrs. Grayson had called and wished to speak to him.

"Bring her in, Ann," he said at once. "Wait a minute! See if my veil is straight."

"Law, yes, Mr. Willie," old Ann gurgled, "yo' veil puhfectly straight, an' yo' do suhtainly look chahmin' in it, honey! I declare if yo' po' maw could see yo' she'd wish mo'n evah dat yo' been a girl."

Mr. Willie only grunted. He was six feet two inches tall, and as he lay stretched out in bed, and looked down toward the place where his toes lifted up the coverlet, it seemed to him that he could measure off a good seven or eight feet of length, and he pictured himself stalking up the church aisle as a very majestic bride.

"Go along, Ann, and show the madam in," he said. "I wonder what she wants to get out of me, now I'm down?"

"Oh, law, honey!" said Ann, who had nursed Mr. Willie in his babyhood, "don't yo' want me to stay hyar so if I see her gettin' de bes' of yo' I kin jes' shoo her out like a ole hen out'n a garden bed" —

"Ann," Mrs. Grayson's voice called down the long straight hall from the parlor door, "have you forgotten that I said I was in a hurry? Perhaps you'll not mind finishing your talk with Mr. Willie after I have done my errand?"

Her voice carried straight to Mr. Willie's ear. "Go along, Ann; I'm not afraid of her if I am on my back," he said. "Anyhow, I can ring for you if she gets too much for me."

Ann returned a moment to the bed to see if the bell was within reach. "Now, Mr. Willie, don't you take no risks," she whispered. "It jes' come in my haid what she's aftah. She want to git de loan of yo' po' maw's guitar so's 't Miss Juanita kin sing to it befoah her beaux. Miss Juanita's a good 'nough girl, Mr. Willie, but dat ain't no 'scuse faw givin' her yo' maw's guitar. Yo' goin' to have a wife of yo' own some day, Mr. Willie" — A rustle of skirts was heard along the hall, and Mr. Willie looked from Ann to the door in a way that ordered her out against her will.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Willie," Mrs. Grayson said, "but I haven't a moment to lose, and Ann seems to be growing more loquacious every year. May I come in?"

"Delighted to have you, Mrs. Grayson," the young man answered, in a voice which might have been heartier if two broken ribs had not impeded it.

Mrs. Grayson marched straight up to the bed, her eyes measuring and testing the length, quality, and condition of the wedding-veil. "It's too bad, Mr. Willie," she

said. "You can't think how sorry I was to hear of your accident, and I should have come over at once if it hadn't been for Juanita's wedding on my hands. There's going to be no one there but the family, or of course you would have been invited; but Juanita says if there isn't anything else she will have a wedding-veil, and it hasn't come, and the wedding is to-night. I should be there this minute, there are so many things to do."

"But who — what — who's Juanita going to marry?" Mr. Willie cried. He had been too much surprised even to ask at first, but now a warlike look was coming up through his astonishment. "The last time I saw her," he went on coolly, "she said she intended to hold out and do as she pleased, if she had to fight for twenty years."

"Mr. Willie," Mrs. Grayson retorted, tightening her lips a little, "you have known Juanita ever since she was a baby, and I should think you'd have noticed that she never does anything to please anybody but herself. I implored her to wait three months and let Mr. Keener come back from Mexico for the wedding" —

"So it's Keener," Mr. Willie broke in; "old enough to be her grandfather. I call that a shame."

"But she wouldn't hear of it," Mrs. Grayson was going on. "It had to be this very week, no matter if it killed me to get ready, and now the veil hasn't come, and there's none to be bought in the village, and that brings me straight to my errand. I'm obliged to buy, borrow, or beg away your veil."

Mr. Willie de Ferriere, old playfellow and life-long friend of Juanita Grayson, looked contemplatively at his far-away toes for a moment, and then turned a questioning gaze on Mrs. Grayson. "Which way will you try first — buying, borrowing, or begging?" he inquired.

Mrs. Grayson opened her mouth. "Willie de Ferriere!" she gasped.

He continued to look up at her defiantly until a deep flush rose in her cheeks and passed up to the roots of her heavy dark hair. She came a little nearer, examining the way in which the veil was fastened to the pillow above Mr. Willie's head. It had been his fancy to have some old pearl pins of his mother's used for the purpose, and the effect was very bridal. "I don't know why you should speak to me like that," she said. "Of course it's unusual to ask to borrow a wedding-veil, but then it is still more unusual for a young man to appropriate the last one

from the store, and you are certainly such an old friend of the family that you'll not object to my taking it." She lifted up the mosquito-bar which hung around the bed and Mr. Willie and the veil, and began unfastening the clasp of one of the pins. A slight smile came upon her set lips without seeming to relax them. "I'm sorry I have to be in such a hurry," she went on, "but when I am gone you can decide at your leisure whether I have bought, borrowed, or begged it."

Mr. Willie's hand was on the bell. "Wait a moment," he said. "If I ring for Ann she will come in and defend me, and it might not be pleasant, but I'll tell you what I'll do. If Juanita is willing to leave me to be eaten up alive while she is getting married under my veil I'll let her have it, but I want her own word for it. If you will go home and send her over here to get the veil herself" —

"But it's too late," Mrs. Grayson protested, her fingers still trembling on the pin. "It all has to be over in time for them to start for Mexico on the half-past ten train."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Mr. Willie; "it's only a quarter to five, and you can hold off the ceremony until nine o'clock. Besides, if Juanita is going to get married and go off to Mexico I'll not have any other chance to say

good-by; and Juanita and I are very old friends, you know. But do just as you please. I shall not give up my wedding-veil into any hands but hers."

Mrs. Grayson hesitated. There was silence for a moment, and then old Ann's voice spoke at the door although there had been no footsteps in the hall. "Didn't I heah yo' ring faw me, Mr. Willie?" she asked.

"No, I didn't ring, Ann," Mr. Willie answered, "but I was thinking of it. I'd like you to open the gate for Mrs. Grayson. She is starting home."

"All right, Mr. Willie," Ann said. And this time they could distinctly hear her shuffling footsteps in the hall.

Mrs. Grayson turned to go. "I shall remember your kindness, Mr. Willie," she said at the door, "but I shall send Juanita over for the veil."

"That is, if Juanita will come," Mr. Willie muttered when he was alone; "and I hope she'll come. I don't believe she wants to marry and go away from Pontomoc without bidding me good-by. Poor little girl!" he mused; "she's been driven to the wall at last, and I've been laid up here and didn't know. I wish" — His thoughts hastened on, keeping the heat from oppressing him. His eyes closed and he smiled. Then the

faint dream of a breeze stole into the room and stirred the wedding-veil against his face. He was very weak from his accident, and for some reason its touch was unspeakably pathetic to him, and he thought of how Juanita would feel when she put it on and it stirred against her face like that. "I don't see how she dares do it," he thought on. "If I were a girl and realized that in a few hours I should pledge away my whole life to come, and if it were only for the sake of peace" — He looked through the mist of the veil at the blue waters of Pontomoc bay glinting outside in the returning breeze, and winding away into a hidden land of promise like a life still free.

The shadows lengthened across the vista from his window, and the little waves upon the bay danced up into a golden light and caught it on their crests. Then the breeze died, and there was not the slightest sound in all the world. The time seemed very long. Mr. Willie felt tired again and restless, and he would have given almost anything he owned if it would have brought him strength to rise upon his elbow and look around the window-casing down the road. He began to think that Juanita had refused to come. Juanita could be inexorably firm when she thought it worth while to assert herself, but

he felt a little hurt that even if she did not want his veil she had not taken it as an excuse to call on him and say good-by. "She might have known I would understand," he thought; "but then, I suppose she has her hands full getting ready for to-night." Even old Ann seemed to have forgotten him. It was very strange that she did not come to see if he wished to have his pillows turned, or to bring him something cool to drink. It was not like her to wait until he rang the bell. "After a little the coast train will be coming in, and Keener will be on it," he thought, "and then my last chance will be gone."

The little gold-topped waves had sunk into glittering pink and azure reaches, over which the sun hung low. Somewhere out of sight a schooner, knowing herself becalmed, threw out her anchor and let her sails come rattling down. Mr. Willie put his hand upon the bell, and then, remembering that he needed nothing, did not ring, but called in a very low voice, "Ann!"

There was no answer, and in the silence he could hear the coast train throbbing far beyond the bay. Then it came rumbling across the trestle, with a shriek for the drawbridge, and another shriek for the village lying inland from the Point, and Mr. Willie knew that in

two hours Juanita Grayson would be married to a man she did not love. The moments passed aimlessly above him while he wondered why it was that he could know so many things to-day that he had never dreamed in all the days before. A red haze filled the distant west, and the sun sank slowly through it to some mystery beyond. Mr. Willie watched until it seemed too much like watching the death of some one very dear. He closed his eyes and the warm tears came up beneath the lids, and his hand' wound itself in the soft tissue of the veil.

There was a creak of wheels along the shell drive from the gate. Mr. Willie's eyes flew open and his hand shook the bell. "Ann!" he called; "somebody's coming, Ann."

Ann ran in, looking excited. "De young lady's aftah yo' veil, suah 'nough," she announced; "but I'll stay right handy, so's 't if you want me" —

"You go to the kitchen," Mr. Willie said, ungratefully; "but show Miss Juanita in first, please."

Old Ann shook her head. "Miss Juanita's a good 'nough girl," she grumbled, "but dat ain't no 'scuse" — Her voice died away along the hall, and the flutter of Juanita's coming took its place. She entered and

walked swiftly up to him with a bright defiance in her eyes.

"It's all done with," she said. "So you may keep your veil."

Mr. Willie tried to smile. "Are you married so early, Juanita?" he asked.

"Married?" she said, standing very white and proud before him. "No, I'm not married. Mr. Keener did not come."

"And hasn't he sent you any word?"

"Oh, yes; a letter on the coast train! He did not telegraph because he wished to go into more detail. You know that this was the very last day possible for him to start to Mexico to take the place that's offered him, and he had to go to the city to finish his preparations; but there was more to be done than he thought, and *he didn't get through*. Oh, Willie, I'm so glad!"

"But I don't understand," began Mr. Willie.

"Of course you don't," the girl broke in with a sharp voice. "You're not such a good business man as he is, and you don't understand how necessary it is to get *all through*. Neither do I understand, nor even mamma. I left her talking it over and trying to. I—I told her I must come and explain why I didn't want the veil. Willie,"—her voice was almost a sob,—“I shall have to hear her talk about it all my life.”

Mr. Willie clinched his hands. "I must get the straight of this," he said. "Does the fellow want to break off the marriage, or only to postpone it?"

"Ho!" she cried, "break it off? You don't know him, Willie. He's in love with me, don't you understand? All that he wants is a little time to arrange business, and then when everything is in running order he will come. He expects to find me waiting for him, like a package left until called for; but that is his mistake. Do you blame me, Willie? I'll not marry him when he comes back. I gave up to mamma only on condition of its being over and done with, and because he was going far away. I knew he would never reproach me and make me unhappy as she does; it seems to have been so much trouble to her to bring me into the world and take care of me, and she always forgets that I did not ask to come. It seemed to me that I should be almost content just to be loved without trying to love him, because he would not always be telling me that I ought to persuade some other person to take care of me, but now" — She dropped on her knees beside the bed and buried her face in her hands. "Oh, Willie, Willie," she sobbed, "I shall not let any one know that I care, excepting you! You are always so good to me, Willie, and I had to come away from

mamma just now or I should have done something, I don't know what, and I was so glad there was an excuse to get away."

Mr. Willie let his hand rest upon her quivering shoulder as tenderly as the sunset color lingered on her hair. "Juanita, do you mind if I tell you something?" he asked.

She lifted a wild, bright face to him. "Mind?" she answered, with a halting breath; "you may tell me anything you please. Did I say that I cared? I don't care about anything in the world now. They have had the chance I gave them, and I am happy to be free."

The ring in her voice seemed to put him far away from her. His hand trembled a little on her shoulder and withdrew. "I wish I could have kept all this from happening," he said.

"What could you have done?" she asked.

The color of the west had fallen on her cheeks and in her eyes. He gazed at her, and his voice was only a whisper through the hush. "Perhaps I could have taught you how to love me, dear," he said.

She gave a little laugh. "And after that?" she asked.

"After that?" he repeated, wondering, for the brightness deepened on her face instead of fading with the clouds.

"Because," she said softly, "you taught me that a long time ago, Willie. That was what made me so happy to be free."

He stretched out his hand to her, and she clasped it close in hers. The twilight was so still that they could hear the soft incoming of the tide.

There came a sound of shuffling footsteps in the hall. "De young lady's hoss is gittin' tol'able skittish 'count of all dese skeeters, Mr. Willie, suh," a voice said at the door.

"All right, Ann; I'm coming," Juanita called. She bent above Mr. Willie for a moment, and went out past old Ann, who eyed her sharply, looking for the veil. A moment later the old horse plodded off along the drive, and Mr. Willie could hear the measured thud of his hoofs long after they had passed the gate and old Ann had shut it with a clang.

The old woman came back presently, and she looked at Mr. Willie with affection as she turned his pillows for him and rearranged his veil.

"Yo' mighty right not to let go of it," she said. "Miss Juanita's a good 'nough girl, but dat ain't no 'scuse faw givin' her yo' weddin'-veil. Yo' goin' to want a wife of yo' own some day, Mr. Willie, an' dat veil'll come in mighty handy to save her from gittin' one, if yo' keeps it nice."

And Mr. Willie smiled and said, "Ann, that is very true."



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